

Record number of Japanese students play truant

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Palestinians demand detainees' release

BETHLEHEM (AP) — Dozens of supporters of the militant group Hamas demonstrated outside the Bethlehem jail Friday to demand the release of Hamas detainees held without trial by Yasser Arafat's security forces. The about 200 demonstrators dispersed peacefully. Last week, hundreds of Palestinians, some of them Hamas supporters, stormed a jail in the West Bank town of Tulkarem, and dozens of detainees escaped. One demonstrator was killed when police opened fire to hold the crowd at bay. Palestinian police had rounded up hundreds of Hamas members this spring after four suicide attacks by the group in Israel.

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Beirut cabinet adopts new election law

BEIRUT (Agencies) — The Lebanese government approved on Friday a draft election law to replace a law declared invalid by the constitutional court and said parliamentary polls set to begin on Aug. 18 will not be postponed.

"The cabinet approved a draft law whose articles are in line with the ruling of the constitutional council and sent it to parliament (for approval)," Agriculture Minister Shawki Fakoury told reporters after an emergency cabinet session.

"The original dates of the elections will remain the same," Mr. Fakoury said, adding that the cabinet has decided to open an extraordinary parliament session to approve the draft law. It was not immediately known when parliament would meet.

The constitutional court on Thursday declared the election law passed on July 11 by the 128-member parliament unconstitutional saying it discriminates among Lebanese.

The court annulled six articles in the old law, mainly one setting up different electoral districts for the Christian heartland of Mount Lebanon and the rest of Lebanon which makes election more difficult for opposition Christians, who demand the withdrawal of Syria's 35,000 troops from Lebanon.

Interior Minister Michel Al Murr had said after the court's ruling that polls might be delayed up to two weeks.

Ten members of parliament (MPs), including two former ministers, had filed against the law. All other government members are single constituency.

(Continued on page 7)

Israel links peace talks with closure of Palestinian deputy's Jerusalem office

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — The new Israeli government warned Friday that it would not enter negotiations with Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) until the Palestinians halt official political activities in Arab East Jerusalem.

"We cannot resume negotiations with the Palestinians as long as they are violating existing autonomy agreements by carrying on illegal political activities in Jerusalem," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a communiqué issued at the end of the weekly cabinet meeting.

Israel argues that Mr. Arafat is violating the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) autonomy agreements by operating offices in Jerusalem. Palestinian self-rule is restricted to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Mr. Netanyahu has said he would never compromise over Jerusalem. "We cannot make progress in negotiations with the Palestinian Authority as long as there are violations in Jerusalem

and in every instance we will act to close down offices operating illegally in Jerusalem," Mr. Netanyahu told his cabinet on Friday.

Mr. Netanyahu criticised his own police minister who earlier this week worked out a compromise with a Palestinian legislator. Hatem Abdul Kader. The legislator had opened an office in East Jerusalem earlier this month to serve his constituents.

Police initially threatened to close down the office, but then settled for a declaration by Mr. Abdul Kader that he had no connections to the PNA.

Mr. Netanyahu said Friday he was not satisfied. "I gave an unequivocal directive to the minister of public security to close the office of Hatem Abdul Kader... and I request that these directives be carried out," Mr. Netanyahu told the cabinet.

Meanwhile the top Palestinian official in Jerusalem warned Israel that its demands for the closure of the PLO headquarters in the Holy City would lead to the "loss of hope" in negotiations between the two sides.

Faisal Al Hussein was quoted on Friday by the international Arabic newspaper Al Sharq Al Awsat as saying the closure of the Orient House would be a setback for Palestinians and Israelis alike.

"For Palestinians (the Orient House) is a symbol of Jerusalem, which means that its closure would symbolise the exclusion of Jerusalem from the peace process and a loss of hope," Mr. Hussein told the newspaper.

"I see two capitals, but I'm not talking about a random division of the city but about two parts with free, open and reciprocal access to them both," Mr. Hussein said when asked about his vision for the future of Jerusalem.

Officials said that in addition to Mr. Abdul Kader's office, Mr. Netanyahu wants to see closed several East Jerusalem offices linked to the PNA, including one dealing with sports and culture and another with land disputes.

(Continued on page 7)

Iraq ready to start oil exports in September after U.N. adopts plan

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq said Friday it was ready to resume limited oil exports next month after the U.N. Sanctions Committee cleared the way for the first easing of the six-year-old oil embargo.

"We expect a resumption of Iraqi crude exports in the second half of September, but that will depend on the speed with which technical details are sorted out," Iraqi negotiator Abdul Amir Al Anbari told the Arab daily Al Hayat.

The U.N. Sanctions Committee on Thursday formally adopted technical guidelines for a May 20 oil-for-food deal after Washington decided to drop its objections to proposals for implementing the accord.

Under the deal, Iraq will be allowed to sell \$2 billion of oil every six months

under strict international control to raise money for badly-needed food and medicine.

However, the Iraqi media reacted with silence Friday to the news that the last political hurdle had been lifted to implementing the deal after three months of U.S. blocking.

Iraqis only learned the news through foreign radio stations. The only newspaper to mention Washington's lifting of its objections Thursday was Babel, run by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday, which prints foreign news agency reports.

Likewise there were no celebrations on the streets of Baghdad, in sharp contrast to May 20 when Iraq and the United Nations signed the oil-for-food accord.

However the national currency, the dinar, which plummeted in value in the past two weeks because of the pessimistic reports coming out of New York, rose Friday to 950 against the dollar on the free market compared to 1,200 on Wednesday.

Since the deal was signed Iraq has repeatedly said its oil installations and terminals were ready to resume immediate exports.

However, Mr. Anbari expressed fears that the United States could again delay the deal. "Of course, they can do it in line with the oil-for-food agreement," the Iraqi negotiator said.

Mr. Anbari added that four steps now had to be

(Continued on page 7)

Netanyahu hits serious political crises

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ended another week buffeted by political turmoil Friday with his foreign minister in open rebellion and his justice minister forced to resign by legal woes.

Foreign Minister David Levy boycotted the weekly cabinet meeting Friday amid fresh reports he might resign in a dispute with Mr. Netanyahu over the sharing of responsibility for foreign policy.

Mr. Levy remained holed up at his home in the northern town of Bet Shean and made no public statement, but officials said negotiations between aides to the two men were continuing.

Close associates to Mr. Levy said the talks involved his demands for specific written assurances he will be given a major role in determining policy related to the Middle East peace process and notably in negotiations with the Palestinians.

Mr. Levy aides warned

Friday that Mr. Levy will resign if a compromise was not worked out. Members of his Geshet party have threatened to quit the governing coalition.

The party holds five seats in the 120-member Knesset, where the government has a 66-seat majority, but deputy party leader David Magen said that other deputies would join the revolt, putting the government's future in doubt.

Mr. Levy, a relative moderate in a government dominated by hardline nationalists, has bristled almost since the administration took office in June because Mr. Netanyahu was running most Israeli diplomacy from his own office, ignoring the foreign ministry.

Mr. Netanyahu notably left Mr. Levy out of his three foreign visits — to Washington, Cairo and Amman — and carried out much of his diplomatic work through his top foreign policy adviser, Dore Gold.

The crisis came to a head

when Mr. Netanyahu said he would name his own cabinet secretary, Danny Naveh, to head a steering committee to oversee negotiations with the Palestinians which Mr. Levy had wanted to control.

Mr. Netanyahu later backed down and agreed to name a neutral former army chief of staff, Don Shomron, to head the committee, but this was not enough for Mr. Levy.

Communications Minister Limor Livnat said Friday that Mr. Netanyahu — as Israel's first directly elected prime minister — was determined to keep a firm grip on his government's foreign policy.

"Netanyahu was elected by universal suffrage and that gives him broad prerogatives," she said in a radio interview. "It is up to him to formulate policy and everyone has to accept that."

Mr. Levy's revolt Friday came a day after Justice Minister Yaacov Neeman

(Continued on page 7)

King visits S. Arabia tomorrow for talks on bilateral relations and peace process

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein visits Saudi Arabia on Sunday for talks with King Fahd Ben Abdul Aziz and other Saudi leaders on bilateral relations, ways to boost Arab solidarity and means to revive the troubled Middle East peace process, official sources said Friday.

Reports that the talks would also cover a proposal to hold a five-way mini summit of Arab leaders could not be immediately confirmed.

The King's visit was first announced by the government on Tuesday, one day after the Monarch held talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Amman.

"The emphasis of the King's talks in Saudi Arabia will be bilateral relations, but the overall status of the Middle East peace process will assume an equally important role in the discussions," said an official source.



King Fahd

On the political front, the King is expected to brief King Fahd and other Saudi leaders on the status of the peace process, the outcome of his talks with Mr. Netanyahu on Monday and with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on Wednesday in Aqaba.

Mr. Arafat said in Gaza on Thursday that his talks with the King included "ways to remove the obstacles in the peace process."

On the bilateral level, the King is expected to discuss



King Hussein

with the Saudi leadership further means to boost Jordanian-Saudi economic cooperation and coordination of positions on various related issues.

Tension in the Gulf following two bombings in Saudi Arabia targeting U.S. interests in November and June and the ongoing U.S.-Iran tug-of-war are also expected to be discussed.

Reports said Jordan had received an assurance that King Fahd will meet with

King Hussein during the latter's visit to Saudi Arabia this week.

King Hussein could not meet King Fahd during a visit he paid to Saudi Arabia in February because the Saudi monarch was recovering from an ailment. King Hussein held talks with Crown Prince Abdullah and other Saudi leaders during the February visit.

The meeting of the two monarchs will be the first after the 1991 Gulf crisis when relations were strained as a result of perceived Jordanian support for Iraq.

Ties have improved since then and were given a strong boost with the signing of a trade accord between the two countries in June.

The King's planned meeting with the Saudi leaders is the latest in a series of intense diplomatic contacts after Mr. Netanyahu made an overture to Syrian President Hafez Al Assad to break the deadlock in the

(Continued on page 7)

Iran warns U.S. against military offensive in Gulf

TEHRAN (AFP) — The head of Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned that his forces were ready to retaliate if the United States tried to mount a military offensive in the Gulf, the official news agency IRNA said Friday.

Amid rising tension between the two countries, Mohsen Rezaei warned: "Our policy is not to take the first step, but if the United States commits an error in the Persian Gulf all their forces would be surrounded."

"If there is an attack on the security of the region, the United States will pay the full price," he said in a speech in the northeast town of Mashhad.

The Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guards) will not allow the United States to interfere in Iran's internal affairs... the Americans must learn that the Persian Gulf must be a safe place for everybody."

Mr. Rezaei's warning came a day after Iran accused the United States of violating its airspace with flights over the Gulf port of Bushehr and the strategic island of Abu Musa.

The Pentagon denied the Iranian charges and said the aircraft were taking part in one of several military exercises in the Gulf.

A flurry of exercises and troop movements have temporarily raised U.S. force levels in the Gulf to some 24,000, according to Pentagon officials, who

stress that the war games have long been planned and are "not related to any real world situation." (see page 2)

But Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati has accused the United States of preparing a military attack against his country and urged the United Nations to intervene to stop the "dangerous move."

U.S. President Bill Clinton, accusing Iran of being a leading sponsor of terrorism, on Monday signed a bill threatening sanctions against non-U.S. companies investing in Iran's and Libya's oil sectors.

Iran's paramount leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowed on Wednesday his country would stand firm against the new U.S. law.

Iran will submit a case against the United States at the International Court of Justice for Washington's reported funding of covert action against Tehran, Mr. Velayati said on Thursday.

"We have prepared the preliminary grounds for our intended complaint to the Hague court, in particular our complaint against America's decision to allocate \$20 million to undermine and sabotage the Iranian state," Mr. Velayati said on Iranian Television.

U.S. officials say privately that Congress in closed meetings authorised for the fiscal year 1996 about \$18 million for covert action designed to boost democracy in Iran.

Ethiopian troops reportedly seize Somali border towns

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Ethiopian forces have attacked and occupied the Somali border towns of Dolow, Luq, Bulohawo and Bihol Garas, reports reaching here said on Friday.

In Nairobi, aid workers said heavy fighting was continuing when they left Luq early Friday morning.

The reports reaching Mogadishu said two battalions of Ethiopian troops, supported by tanks, armoured vehicles and fighter planes, attacked the four border towns on Thursday night and occupied them.

"It was quite frightening," one aid worker said in Nairobi.

"Three helicopters came to destroy the town. Missiles were fired.

We were at the airport, so we could not see how many casualties there were, but they must have been heavy."

Ethiopian forces have been fighting in the border region against an Islamic fundamentalist group, Al Itihad Al Islam, which has been carrying out a hit-and-run guerrilla war for a long time in Ethiopia's southeastern Ogaden region, inhabited by ethnic Somalis, according to the reports.

The aid workers said that Luq, which has a population of 10,000 to 15,000 people, was the headquarters of the fundamentalist group.

A press statement released here by the Al Itihad Al Islam group on Friday claimed that its guerrillas had repulsed the attack, inflicting heavy losses on

the Ethiopian invaders. "The holy fighters killed more than 100 and wounded many more of the Ethiopian attackers during the fighting, which is still continuing, for 15 dead on their side," the fundamentalist group said in the statement, released in south Mogadishu.

The group accused Ethiopian forces of massacring innocent civilians and destroying houses and water wells.

It also charged that former military officers of the Somali National Front (SNF) that embraces the Mahoran clan of ousted Somali dictator Mohammad Siad Barre had been leading the Ethiopians in their struggle against Somalia.

The Al Itihad Al Islam group is suspected to have bombed the Wabi Shebele Hotel in the Ethiopian capital on Monday, killing one person and wounding at least 10 others.

Last month, Ethiopia's transport minister was wounded in an attack in which a police officer and a bodyguard were killed.

Al Itihad Al Islam claimed responsibility for that attack as well as bomb blasts at two other Ethiopian hotels earlier this year. One of the blasts, at the Ghion Hotel in Addis Ababa in January, killed three people and injured about 20.

Al Itihad Al Islam at the time said it would pursue its attacks against government officials until the province of Ogaden was given its independence.

(Continued on page 7)

Yeltsin sworn in, vows decisive rule

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Boris Yeltsin, sworn in Friday for a second term as Russian president, promised to continue "in a spirit of decision and firmness" the task he had begun five years ago.

In a Kremlin banquet toast Mr. Yeltsin said: "By the will of the people I will continue the task I began five years ago. Popular support gives me the right to act in a spirit of decision and firmness."

Mr. Yeltsin was reelected head of state in a presidential run-off on July 3. The 65-year-old leader

looked stiff and ill at ease as he stood to take his oath in a Kremlin ceremony overshadowed by renewed bloodshed in Chechnya and fears over his health.

He did not stumble as he walked across the stage of the vast Kremlin palace congress hall and stood solidly before 3,000 invited guests and millions of television viewers. But his performance will do little to end speculation about his health.

Trumpets blared, a choir sang and 30 big Kremlin guns gave him a celebratory salute after he took his

oath with his right hand on a special edition of the Russian constitution.

Alexey II, patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, blessed him with the sign of the cross. A state award in the form of a large gold chain was placed around his neck and a presidential banner was raised over the Kremlin's golden domes.

In his banquet toast quoted by the Kremlin news service, Mr. Yeltsin promised to "rule in the interests of all Russians, and I mean all. We all share the same country."

He also appealed for a

strengthening of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the loose forum grouping 12 former Soviet republics, including Russia, created after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

"Our peoples achieved independence together and it is only together that we can achieve prosperity," he added in a reference to economic ties which still bind the former Soviet republics, several of whose leaders were present.

The president has a new

(Continued on page 7)

Cyprus braced for violence

NICOSIA (R) — The divided island of Cyprus is bracing for violence on Sunday, when up to 7,000 motorcyclists plan to smash their way from Greek Cypriot south to Turkish-occupied north through a heavily manned buffer zone.

Raising the prospects of trouble, Turkish "Grey Wolf" far-right militants said on Friday they planned to counter the rally on the Greek Cypriot side by sending 2,500 bikers to the other side of the U.N.-patrolled green line divide.

"If the Greek Cypriot youths violate our territory they will find...the Grey Wolves facing them," Azmi Karamahmutoglu, leader of the Islamist fraternities group, told reporters in Ankara.

He said some of the Turkish bikers have already left to the self-proclaimed Turkish republic of northern Cyprus ahead of Sunday's Greek Cypriot rally.

The Greek Cypriot bikers want to draw international attention to the continued division of Cyprus, 22 years after Turkey invaded the north in response to a short-lived coup in Nicosia engineered by the military ruling Greece at the time.

The breakaway state in the north is recognised only by Ankara. They say the protest will be peaceful, but armies on both sides, police and United Nations troops are getting ready for trouble.

The Turkish army says it has orders to shoot. "If they violate our borders and incur on Turkish Cyprus territory they will be fired on," a military source said.

The British high commission and the American embassy have advised their citizens to steer clear away from the buffer zone on Sunday.

"We have told people to stay calm and avoid the buffer zone because of the bikers rally," said Piers Cazalet, a spokesman at the British high commission.

"We are hoping there won't be any incidents but we expect some might break out," he said.

Sources in the American embassy told Reuters similar warnings have been made to U.S. citizens.

Very few who believe that the rally, the largest since the 1974 invasion, will pass without incident.



U.S. Marines taking part in military exercises in the Kuwaiti desert take cover from imaginary enemies behind the wall of a derelict building Friday (Reuters photo)

Flurry of exercises, troop movement boost U.S. force level in Gulf region

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A flurry of military exercises and troops movements have raised U.S. force levels in the Gulf to some 24,000 in the wake of a terrorist bombing in Saudi Arabia, according to Pentagon officials.

Many of the extra troops are in the Gulf region temporarily, and Pentagon officials insist that the exercises have long been planned and are "not related to any real world situation".

But they come amid rising tension with Iran, which Defence Secretary William Perry last week accused of being the "leading candidate" for international terrorism directed at the United States.

Iran charged Thursday that U.S. warplanes had violated its airspace, causing a sonic boom over the Gulf port city of Bushahr and overflying Abu Musa.

The island, which is controlled by Iran, sits near the entrance to the strategic Straits Of Hormuz at one end of the Gulf. It bristles with hawk anti-aircraft missiles and Chinese anti-ship missiles, according to the U.S. military.

Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon flatly denied the Iranian charges, saying U.S. aircraft kept to international airspace while operating in the Gulf.

"We do not anticipate any problem with Iran. They understand we're operating in international airspace, they operate in international airspace unimpeded and we anticipate that we will too," he said.

The U.S. aircraft were taking part in exercise Rugged Nautilus — one of several exercises and special deployments that have significantly raised U.S. troop levels in the Gulf since the June 25 bombing of a U.S. military housing complex in Dhahran.

Mr. Perry told reporters Saturday that U.S. force levels in the Gulf numbered some 15,000, but Pentagon officials said the total actually is about 24,000.

Rugged Nautilus began on July 1 and involves the U.S. aircraft carrier Carl Vinson, the helicopter assault ship USS Tarawa, as well as an air expeditionary force in Qatar.

An estimated 1,300 military personnel — including a military intelligence battalion and an electronic communications squadron — have been brought in from the United States for the exercise, Pentagon officials said.

They were to take part in strategic command and control training and an electronic warfare exercise, the officials said. Force levels in the Gulf will get another boost Friday with the deployment of 1,200 U.S. army troops to Kuwait Friday from U.S. bases for a four-month exercise called Intrinsic Action 96-3.

The battalion-sized force, the third to be rotated through Kuwait this year, will train with tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles prepositioned in the emirate, according to the Pentagon.

In Saudi Arabia, an estimated 1,200 engineers, security personnel and other specialists are being flown in from the United States to prepare an air base at Al Khafar for allied air operations being moved from Dhahran and Riyadh.

Mr. Bacon said 770 of them already have arrived at the base in the desert south of Riyadh.

Those troops are in addition to a large, more permanent U.S. force in the Gulf, which has been assembled since the 1991 Gulf war to deter Iraq and Iran.

They include between 5,500 and 6,200 U.S. military personnel in Saudi Arabia, about 4,000 of whom are involved in conducting air missions over southern Iraq to enforce a no-fly zone and most of the others in military assistance to the Saudis.

Another 1,000 U.S. air force personnel are in Qatar with an air expeditionary force that was deployed in late June with 34 aircraft to take part in the missions over southern Iraq.

In the Gulf itself, an estimated 14,500 sailors, marines and airmen are aboard a 20-ship armada led by the Vinson, which sailed into the Gulf several days after the Dhahran bombing.

Hundreds of U.S. marines landed on a beach north of Kuwait City on Friday as part of the exercises aimed at demonstrating the quick-action capability of American forces in the Gulf.

The amphibious exercise was conducted to "demonstrate our (U.S.) capability to project power without any dependence on any infrastructure such as ports," said Colonel John C. Garrett, commanding officer of the 13th Marine Expeditionary Force.

New Islamist group vows holy war against Qadhafi

CAIRO (AFP) — A new armed Islamist movement in Libya calling itself the Group of the Followers of God vowed "holy war" against Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi in its first statement published Friday by the Arab daily Al Hayat.

The fundamentalist group said it decided to form "after an escalation of the Jihad (holy war) in Libya and acts of oppression by the regime."

"In line with the divide duty to fight apostates, the Followers of God has decided to declare itself to carry out its legal duty to Islam and Muslims," the statement said.

It said its aims were to restore Islamic rule in Libya, though it stressed it would work independently from other Islamic fundamentalist organisations.

The new group is the third fundamentalist organisation to be founded in Libya in recent years, after the Movement of Islamist Martyrs and the Militant Islamic Group.

The Militant Islamic Group has claimed most anti-government attacks in Libya since 1995.

According to the Libyan Human Rights League, a non-Islamic opposition movement, clashes between security forces and fundamentalists in Libya have left 600 dead in the past year.

A league activist, Ali Al-Sharif, told the Arab daily Al Wassat that the fundamentalist groups were mostly composed of "young men" angry at the "monopoly of power held by Qadhafi and his family as well as their iron grip on the state's wealth."

Travellers arriving in Egypt from Libya have reported several violent clashes between Libyan police and militants in the past several months.

Most of the incidents have taken place in the eastern region of Benghazi. According to Libyan opposition sources, the town has been under a security clampdown since June.

Jordan and Israel agree to boost security cooperation

The Jerusalem Post

CENTRAL REGIONAL commander Major-General Uzi Dayan met with the Jordanian army's deputy chief-of-staff, General Tashin Shurdum last week to discuss ways to improve security along the border.

The meeting focused on the bloody ambush in June in which gunmen infiltrated from Jordan, killed three Israeli soldiers, stole their weapons and fled.

At the meeting, held on the Jordanian side of the Adam Bridge (Prince Abdullah Bridge), area commanders from both armies discussed the implementation of lessons learned from the ambush, an army spokesman said.

Those who participated in the meeting stressed the importance of maintaining a high level of security along the border, but at the same time allowing contin-

ued civilian activities in the area.

Both sides agreed to continue holding meetings between area commanders to ensure changes are implemented.

An inquiry into the ambush found that army commanders had failed to quickly relay a report of the attack to the Jordanians, and it was only about six hours later that the Jordanian army was notified and began to sweep the area for the gunmen, who succeeded in escaping.

Since the ambush, the army has reportedly beefed up its patrols along the normally quiet border with Jordan. Regular soldiers have been re-assigned to the front, which had been guarded by reservists until the attack, and reservists are now being retrained in shooting, charging and throwing hand-grenades.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kabul denies sheltering terrorists

ISLAMABAD (R) — President Burhanuddin Rabbani's embattled government in Afghanistan said on Thursday it was not sheltering any foreign terrorists in areas under its control. Official Kabul Radio, monitored in Islamabad, quoted a Foreign Ministry statement as saying the government had always sought goodwill and better relations with other countries and had never allowed its soil to be used by terrorists. The statement followed an article in the Los Angeles Times on Monday saying that more than 12,000 foreign Muslims had learned techniques of combat and sabotage at camps in Afghanistan or on Afghan-Pakistan frontier.

Nine dead in inter-Kurd fighting

ANKARA (R) — An Iraqi Kurdish group on Friday accused a rival militia of killing nine people in an artillery attack on a town in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq. "Nine were killed and about 30 were injured in the artillery attack on Kasnazan," a spokesman at the Ankara office of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) told Reuters. He said Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) forces launched Wednesday's artillery attack on Kasnazan, several kilometres from the region's main city Erbil, after the KDP had repelled a previous PUK assault on the town. It was not clear whether the dead were KDP fighters or civilians. The PUK was not immediately available for comment. A feud between the two groups has cost about 3,000 lives and split northern Iraq into rival zones. There have been no major clashes for more than a year.

Israel joined Mars project but quit

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's space agency participated in a Russian programme to send a spaceship to Mars in the early 1990s but had to back out of the project due to a lack of funds, it was reported Friday. Avi Har-Even, head of the space administration, told the Haaretz newspaper in an interview that Israeli scientists were involved in developing three-dimensional, computer-aided photography techniques for mapping Mars during the mission. The project was part of a joint U.S.-Russian programme aimed at sending an unmanned spaceship to Mars this October. Mr. Har-Even said Israel took part in the project from 1993 to 1995, when it had to pull out due to budget constraints.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel. 773111-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
15:05	Canoe — Moomin
15:30	Pumpkin Patch
15:45	Here's Lucy
16:30	Comedy — Big Brother
17:00	Sciences Cartoon
17:15	La Vie Devant Moi
17:30	Pyramide
18:00	Chateau Valon
19:00	Le Journal
19:15	Faut Pas Rever
19:30	News Headlines
19:35	Comedy — The Toddlers
20:00	The Album Show
20:45	Drama — Miami Vice
21:10	Prism
22:00	News in English
22:25	The Bold and the Beautiful
23:15	Feature Film "Not Our Son"

PRAYER TIMES

04:26	Fajr
05:51	(Sunrise) Dhuha
12:41	Dhuhr
16:21	Asr
19:31	Maghreb
21:57	Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church	Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church	Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church	Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation	Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church	Tel. 661656
Terrasanta Church	Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation	Tel. 623541
Anglican Church	Tel. 652826

TELEPHONE NUMBERS	
Armenian Catholic Church	Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church	Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church	Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church	Tel. 652526
Evangelical Lutheran Church	Tel. 824528
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation	Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints	Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth	Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman	Tel. 811295
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish	Tel. 614190

WEATHER	
Temperatures are expected to rise becoming slightly above average with winds northwesterly moderate.	
In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate to active and seas calm.	
Min/Max temp.	
Amman	22/34
Aqaba	27/41
Deserts	20/37
Jordan Valley	26/40
Yesterday's high temperatures:	
Amman 35, Aqaba 42 Humidity readings: Amman 29 per cent, Aqaba 30 per cent.	

USEFUL	
Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue	630341
Civil Defence Emergency	199
Rescue Police 192	621111
637777	
Fire Brigade	617101
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Department	630321
Hotel Complaints	605800

NIGHT DUTY	
AMMAN:	
Dr. Khalil Al Tushiq	757253
Dr. Bahjat Bader	832642
Dr. Nasser Ibrahim	830432
Dr. Wafiq Qaddoumi	893442
Firas pharmacy	661912
Ferdows pharmacy	778336
Al Asema pharmacy	637055
Naioukh pharmacy	623672
Al Salam pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644945
Shmeisani pharmacy	637660
Najib pharmacy	847632
IRBID:	
Dr. Ghazi Ta'ammeh	250080
Al Quds pharmacy	(—)
ZARQA:	
Dr. Walid Nabhan	995743
Khalifeh pharmacy	985417

EMERGENCIES	
Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue	630341
Civil Defence Emergency	199
Rescue Police 192	621111
637777	
Fire Brigade	617101
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Department	630321
Hotel Complaints	605800

HOSPITALS	
AMMAN:	
Hussein Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn	644281/6
Aklieh Maternity, J. Amn	642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Malhas, J. Amman	636140
Palestine, Shmeisani	607071
Shmeisani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845845
Al-Mushar Hospital	667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali	666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali	664164/6

HOSPITALS	
AMMAN:	
Hussein Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn	644281/6
Aklieh Maternity, J. Amn	642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Malhas, J. Amman	636140
Palestine, Shmeisani	607071
Shmeisani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845845
Al-Mushar Hospital	667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali	666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali	664164/6

ARRIVALS (RW)	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights	
08:00	Damascus (RJ)
10:30	Beirut (RJ)
10:30	Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:30	New Delhi (RJ)
11:00	Abu Dhabi, Doha (RJ)
11:00	Colombo (RJ)
15:10	Istanbul (RJ)
15:45	New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:20	Cairo (RJ)
19:15	London, Berlin (RJ)
20:40	Vienna (RJ)
02:50	Madrid (RJ)
05:30	Bangkok (RJ)

(02)3247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital
.....(03)314111

**FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT**

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)533200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (08) 52700 or (08) 523250.

Saturday, August 10, 1996
and Israel agree
security cooperation

Home News

Three workers die in Baqaa waste treatment plant accident

AMMAN (J.T.) — Three people were killed and a fourth was listed in critical condition in a drowning incident in a 10-metre-deep percolation pit located within the Baqaa Waste-water Treatment Plant, according to Civil Defence Department (CDD) sources.

The sources said Mohammad Eid Abdul Qader (22), Ibrahim Mohammad Salim Sawarkeh (32), Mohammad Ulayyan Ayed Masri (35), all employed by the Water and Sewerage Authority, Friday fell in a 10-metre-deep wastewater pond.

The cause of death was listed as inhalation of poisonous gases.

The fourth, who drove a privately-owned septic tanker, is reported in critical condition and under treatment at the University of

Jordan Hospital.

Wednesday night, 200 Indian workers were rushed to Bahsir and Luzzilla Hospitals and King Hussein Medical Centre, suffering from vomiting, diarrhoea and severe colic, resulting from food poisoning, according to a report published in the Arabic daily Al Ra'i.

The victims, who work for two contracting and construction companies in the Khaldia area in western Amman, developed food poisoning symptoms after having dinner at their boarding house.

An Indian Embassy official Thursday visited the hospitalised workers and said the patients were responding well to medical treatment.

Department head of first aid and emergency treat-

ment at Al Bashir Hospital, Anwar Khasawneh, said 27 victims were admitted to Al Bashir on Thursday suffering from food poisoning symptoms.

In Deir Alla in the central Jordan Valley, a 20-year-old woman was burned at a deserted house in Maa'ddi town, according to a report in Al Dustour Arabic daily.

The woman told the police that she was sleeping with her family members on the roof of their house, when she unexpectedly saw two unknown persons in close proximity.

They sprayed an anaesthetic substance which blinded and incapacitated her, she said, adding that by the time she was able to see she found herself on fire in a deserted house.

Security forces rushed to the scene, carried her to

Maa'ddi Hospital and began their investigation of the incident.

Festive firing kills wedding guest

A 24-year-old man Thursday was killed by a stray bullet during an incident of "festive firing" at a wedding in Karak.

The death of the young man instigated a police investigation in order to find which of the guests had fired the bullet.

Jordanian authorities are trying to stop the widespread tradition of firing in the air at weddings which, according to police statistics, leaves an average of five dead and dozens of injured each year.

Prime minister promises farmers parliamentary action

DEIR ALLA (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti promised Jordan Valley farmers that their concerns would be brought up in upcoming parliamentary debates.

During a visit to the Deir Alla region in the central Jordan Valley Thursday to meet with farmers, he pledged immediate government attention to various complaints aired during their meeting.

Representatives of the farmers, including local deputies and other community leaders, raised issues of heavy debts incurred by the farmers and combining the elimination of some while creating a manageable payment schedule for others.

The Prime Minister assured debate of this issue at the Lower House of Parliament, along with issues



Abdul Karim Kabariti concerning the marketing of valley produce.

He proposed the creation of two companies dealing with such commercial concerns, which would follow the example set by other international organisations

in not restricting their yield to local or regional markets.

The farmers' demands included: the distribution of federally owned lands to local residents, the facilitation of university education for their children, a greater allocation from the National Aid Fund for Jordan Valley residents who are in need, the reduction of electricity and water fees, the management of rodents and other pests currently infesting the region, and, finally, the joint promotion of municipal and village councils.

Mr. Kabariti avowed that the government would focus on these concerns and that it supported those farmers who were diligent and utilised their land to increase food production.

He added that he found the farmers' demands rea-

sonable, and that speedy measures would be taken to address at least 60% of them in the near future.

Mr. Kabariti was accompanied on the tour by the ministers of Public Works and Housing, Health, Education, Social Development, and Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment.

At the close of his tour, the Prime Minister inspected construction work at the burial place of one of the Prophet Mohammad's companions, Obaida Ben Al Jarrah.

The Ministry of Awaqaf and Islamic Affairs is undertaking the project and will erect a shrine at the site which will include a large mosque at the projected cost of JD 4 million.

It is due to be completed in 1998.

NEWS IN BRIEF

enies sheltering terrorists

in inter-Kurd fighting

red Mars project but

Trial of former deputy Abbadi postponed

AMMAN (Petra) — The trial of former parliament deputy and police officer Ahmad Oweidi Abbadi scheduled to start Thursday was postponed to Sept 5, because the lawyers and court judges involved in the case are on summer holiday.

Also, the Court of First Instance, at which the case is being tried, has failed to call the key witness, Jihad Momani.

The defendant is accused of undermining national unity, inciting people to commit crimes and fuelling bigotry through his writings in the local weekly tabloid, Shihani.

Mr. Momani, the responsible editor of Shihani, is currently in Canada and could not be reached, according to newspaper officials.

Also Thursday, between 400 to 500 of Mr. Abbadi's supporters stood in front of the court house and shouted slogans in favour of Dr. Abbadi's views for which he was arrested.

Mideast countries to discuss power network linkage project

AMMAN (J.T.) — A technical committee consisting of representatives from Jordan and four other Middle Eastern countries Saturday will discuss in Damascus a draft of a general agreement on electricity tariffs, electrical power exchanges and several technical matters related to it.

Mohammad Azzam, head of the Jordan Electricity Authority (JEA)'s planning department, said that the committee members will review the implementation of the regional electricity grid linkage project and hope to agree on the signing of a final draft which will

later be endorsed by the heads of national electricity institutions of Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey.

Mr. Azzam said the ministers of energy in charge have already approved the implementation of the project.

The first step will link the Jordanian, Syrian, Egyptian and Turkish grids before the end of 1997, followed by the Syrian and Iraqi grids in 1998 and the Iraqi and Turkish ones by the year 2002.

Jordan and Egypt are already proceeding with the linkage project between their respective grids.

The regional project is being financed by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development.

Israel to join the national project

At some point, Israel will join the regional network as Jordan and Israel have agreed upon it in the October 1994 peace treaty.

The two sides meanwhile reached an agreement on a temporary linkage between the networks of Aqaba and Eilat but little progress has been reported so far.

JD 112.9 m in 8 water projects to help water shortage situation

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Water and Irrigation is carrying out eight irrigation projects at a total cost of JD 112.9 million, according to a ministry source.

One such project is a JD 6 million scheme to replace the eroded parts of the main water pipeline in the northern Jordan Valley with iron pipes to prevent water loss.

The source said, 80 per cent of the project costs will be financed by a loan from the Japanese Overseas Aid Fund, while the remaining 20 per cent will be covered by the

Treasury.

The source added that a JD 10 million tender for cleaning and maintaining the King Abdullah Canal was offered in February 1995 to a British company.

The project is partly financed by a grant provided by the European Investment Bank (EIB).

The project, which aims to store 10 million cubic metres (mcm) of water entering the canal, will be completed by the end of August 1997.

The source added that a JD 23.7 million water irrigation project in the

northern Jordan Valley has been completed.

It was designed to replace the traditional method of irrigation through open channels with pipelines to save 20 mcm of water to irrigate a 73-million-dunum area.

The source said, again, that the Japanese Overseas Aid Fund has covered 80 per cent of the project's costs, while the Treasury covered 20 per cent.

The ministry is also implementing a JD 3.2 million project aimed at carrying 45 mcm of water from the King Talal

Dam to Abul Zighan area through a 4.2-kilometre pipeline.

The source said that 90 per cent of the project's cost will be covered by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development which granted 1.9 million Kuwaiti dinars towards financing the project costs.

Other projects include completing the second phase of the Wadi Mujib irrigation project, which will attempt to irrigate 5,400 dunums in the southern Jordan Valley.

Visa stays extended for GCC visitors

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Citizens of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries visiting Jordan can now extend their stay from the former limit of two weeks to a new term of two months, sources at the Ministry of Interior said Friday.

A senior public security department officer said any GCC citizen will be permitted to stay in Jordan for two months before reporting to the authorities.

Nationals of the GCC countries, which include

the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman, are not required to obtain a visa to visit Jordan, the officer said.

Meanwhile, the Qatari News Agency (QNA) reported that the Jordanian consulate in Tel Aviv has issued instructions requiring all Israelis wishing to obtain visas to Jordan, to report in person at the consulate and not through tourist agencies as was previously permitted.

This measure is justified by the principle of reciprocity.

Government moves to stem archaeological pillage

By Saad Hattar
Agence France Presse

AMMAN — Jordan is moving to curb the number of archaeological thefts by residents here, which has soared since it signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994.

Israelis are apparently more interested in purchasing relics than other tourists and willing to pay more for them.

The "higher demand for relics has sent prices soaring and (so) stealing increased following the peace treaty with Israel," Minister of Tourism Saleh Isheidat said. "After the opening of border crossings with Israel, demand from visitors and tourists for artifacts found in Jordanian territories was high," the minister said.

The Israelis had more money to spend, according to Dr. Isheidat, who added that "they took advantage of higher living standards and cost of living in Israel."

Officials are growing increasingly concerned with what they see as antiquities thieves encroaching on Jordan's human and national heritage.

That heritage includes 100,000 relics, the ancient rose-hued Nabataean city of Petra, carved in the second century BC, and the remains of the Decapolis in Jordan — nine Greco-Roman cities from the first century AD, including the Gerasa site of today's Jerash, Gidara at Um Quais and Pella at Irbid.

Scores of thieves have been rounded up by police in a nationwide crackdown aimed at preserving artifacts in Jordan's "open air museum."

The government is cracking down on rings of thieves and on amateur archaeologists, stiffening the enforcement of the penal code and increasing the number of guards at

archaeological sites from the current 290.

Dr. Isheidat was not able to provide the value of the stolen relics, but said there have been dozens of arrests for archaeological thefts.

But the thievery became so rampant that His Majesty King Hussein, in his speech to the government of Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti in February condemned the "stealing (of) the country's heritage."

Khaled, an amateur archaeologist, said scores of Jordanians have "taken up the quest of unearthing ancient treasures" from the Hellenistic-age, to the Ottoman.

"Illegal findings are usually sold on the black market at prices ranging from one dollar for Old Testament coins to thousands of dollars for columns' stone crowns and ancient cemetery gates," [mainly from Greco-Roman cities], Khaled added.

"Tomb diggers" use high-tech metal detectors, which are banned in Jordan, black magic, fairy tales and stories handed down from the elderly to locate sites rich in archaeological finds.

In one case thieves removed part of the Ottoman railway track in search of treasure believed to have been buried by the retreating Ottoman army at the turn of the century.

Three years ago, a band of thieves removed a mosaic floor from a desert castle dating back to the Umayyad dynasty (660 to 750 AD).

The thieves were later arrested and the mosaic tiles painstakingly restored to its original location.

Thousands of ancient artifacts have become part of private collections in Jordanian homes, and the government is seeking to register them.

"We will not retrieve any of the private collection



Police and Antiquities Department officials look over a cache of stolen ancient pottery and other relics retrieved during a raid (file photo)

relics, except those needed for archaeological restoration," Dr. Isheidat said. "And we will compensate their owners."

Jordan is also seeking the return of some of its finest relics from abroad, such as the facade of Al Mushatta Palace which is now housed at Berlin's Pergamon Museum.

NEWS IN BRIEF

233 prisoners to be released

AMMAN (Petra) — On the occasion of the anniversary of His Majesty King Hussein's accession to the Throne, which falls on Sunday, the Minister of Interior, Awad Khreisat, requested provincial governors to arrange for the release of 233 administrative detainees, including 150 Jordanians and 83 non-Jordanian Arabs.

Produce exports up

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan exported 37.8 tonnes of fruits and vegetables estimated at JD 5.95 million last month, compared to 29.64 tonnes during the same month in 1995. Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC) sources said Friday. Vegetables accounted for 77.3 per cent of the total exports. Sources said the major importers were the United Arab Emirates ranked first with 48.5 per cent of exports, followed by Kuwait with 21.1 per cent, and Bahrain with 14.44 per cent. Qatar came fourth with total imports of 5.484 tonnes or 14.43 per cent, and Saudi Arabia ranked fifth with 5 per cent.

Workplace injuries on the rise

AMMAN (Petra) — A total of 8,387 work injuries have been reported during the first six months of this year, compared with 7,332 injuries during the same period in 1995, according to Faysal Alamat, director of the Department of Occupational Safety and Health. Dr. Alamat attributed this increase in work injuries to a remarkable increase in the number of workplaces and employees, in addition to the failure by some employers to follow professional safety and health rules and regulations operative at the work sites.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

* "Science for Health" exhibition at the British Council, until Aug. 15.

* Abstract (plastic) art by Hussein Da'sh and Nabih Samarah on Jerusalem at the Orfali Art Gallery, Durrat Al-Bayna (Tel. 626932), until Aug. 15.

* Graphic works by Imran Qader at the Phoenix Art Gallery (Tel. 692294), until Aug. 15.

* Photo exhibition by Ham Houran entitled "People and Places" at the Bahadra Art Gallery (Tel. 687598), until Aug. 15.

Chechens rebels driven from Grozny government building

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian forces drove out rebels holding the pro-Moscow Chechen administration headquarters in Grozny Friday, while Russian soldiers were reported to have killed 18 civilians to death at random to the north of the capital.

Russian forces expelled the rebels from a government building in Grozny and rescued 20 Russian journalists trapped in an official residence during fighting, Interfax News Agency reported, quoting the Russian command.

Meanwhile, separatist sources said Russian troops killed 18 men to death after randomly stopping cars in the north of Chechnya.

In the Chechen capital, an AFP correspondent on the scene said severe fighting had intensified around the government headquarters, symbol of Russian power in the city, just before 5:00 p.m. (1300 GMT) the Russian command said its troops had driven rebel fighters from Interior Ministry and Security Services (former KGB) buildings. Russian helicopter gunships blasted the area relentlessly.

Rebels were retreating to the central market and the railway station, a few hundred metres away, they added.

According to Chechen sources, the alleged massacre of Chechen civilians occurred Thursday evening at the village of Komsomolskoye in the north-east of the southern Russian republic.

The radio station Moscow Echo quoted the separatist spokesman Movladi Udogov and Interfax agency quoted an unidentified Chechen source as saying three Russian helicopters had landed, soldiers had alighted and stopped passing cars, forcing the passengers out and killing the 18 male victims.

The report could not immediately be confirmed independently.

Mr. Udogov was quoted as saying many of the people travelling near Komsomolskoye have been fleeing Gudermes, where separatists have seized the local Russian military headquarters and where fighting is said to be taking place.

Russian "Spetsnaz" Special Forces evacuated 20 Russian journalists who

had been stranded inside an official building since the beginning of the latest rebel offensive Tuesday.

The Chechen separatists said early Friday they captured the pro-Moscow administration building in the centre of the Chechen capital.

ITAR-TASS quoted the Russian command as saying relieving forces had finally reached the besieged Russian units at the government headquarters at 4:20 p.m. (1220 GMT).

The source was quoted as saying the relief column from the south had to "proceed slowly, taking back territory from the separatists inch by inch."

TASS reported that further Russian units were moving towards the centre from the western suburb of Zavodskoy, while a unit of Interior Ministry special assault troops had succeeded in linking up with encircled troops in the northwest Staropromyslovsky district of the Chechen capital.

Interior Ministry Forces Command said that in the space two days between 250 and 270 rebel fighters had been killed.

Interfax later said the 20 Russian journalists were still trapped in the Grozny building late Friday, contrary to claims by the Russian command.

A correspondent for Radio Russia, who is the only journalist to be able to use a cellular phone, denied the statement by the Russian command and said journalists and civilians employed by the government hotel continued to be holed up in the cellar of the building.

Chechen forces were reported to be attacking army positions at Grozny's civilian airport, one of the two key bases for Russian troops in the area.

A Russian staff headquarters officer admitted earlier that the situation in Grozny was "totally out of control," and that 7,000 troops were trapped by the rebels.

He said Russian "units blocked in Grozny are not even trying to attack the separatists, limiting themselves to passive defence."

Chechen rebels meanwhile admitted they had been forced to suspend an assault on the Federal Security Service

Headquarters in the centre after Russian armour broke through to reinforce beleaguered federal forces there, a Chechen spokesman told Interfax.

Three tanks took up position near the besieged building and blasted rebel positions, forcing separatists to pull back 50 to 70 metres and halt their operation to take the building, where Russian troops earlier rejected a surrender offer.

The Chechens said they had destroyed two other tanks trying to relieve the building.

Konstantin Pulikovskiy, the Russian commander in Chechnya, said the situation in Grozny "is difficult but not out of control."

Sergei Slipchenko, spokesman for a Russian Commission on the Chechen Crisis, said separatist fighters had attacked Grozny's civilian airport with automatic weapons and grenade launchers, Interfax reported.

Interfax meanwhile cited the Russian military command saying 120 troops had been killed and another 400 injured since fighting began early Tuesday. Around 50 others were reported missing.

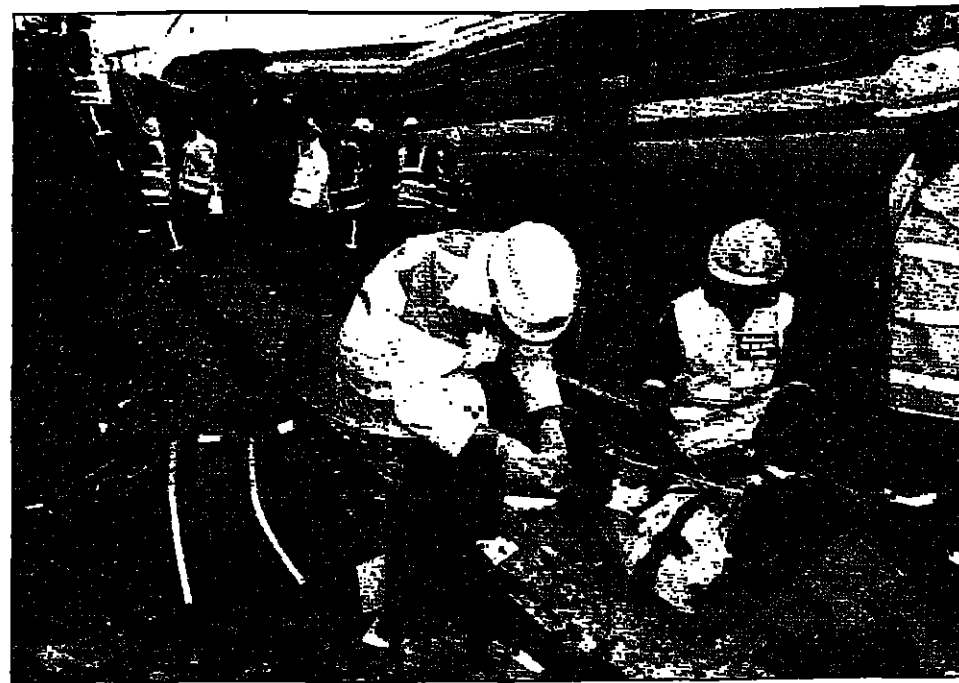
The upsurge in violence has left Russian forces in disarray on the day Boris Yeltsin was sworn in at the Kremlin for a second term as president.

ITAR-TASS said 59 Federal Security Service (former KGB) personnel had been killed, and that 30 civilians had been wounded and an unknown number killed.

Grozny's northern and northwest quarters were struck with mortars and bombs overnight as fighting intensified on a road apparently to be used by a Russian column of reinforcements.

The fighting began at dawn Tuesday when Chechen rebels mounted a surprise offensive in Grozny as well as Argun and Gudermes.

More than 40,000 people have been killed since Russian soldiers marched into the breakaway Caucasus republic in late 1994 to quell a three-year independence drive.



Rescue workers attend the scene of crash between a packed commuter train and a freight train in north London Thursday. At least one person was killed and over 80 injured in the rush-hour collision (Reuter photo)

1 killed, 66 hurt in British train crash

WATFORD, England (R) — A woman died and 66 people were injured Thursday when a commuter train crashed into an empty train travelling in the opposite direction northwest of London, police said.

Some 23 passengers had to be released by firemen who used cutting gear, senior fire officer Steve Seavers told a news conference.

They had been travelling in the front carriage of the train which was turned over by the force of the impact and which ended up beneath a section of the second carriage.

The engines of both trains also lay on their sides on top of an embankment after the accident, but the two drivers were not seriously hurt.

Some 400 people had been travelling on the commuter train, mostly returning home after a day's work in the capital.

Police said only a small number of the injured were seriously hurt. Most were treated at the Watford Hospital north-west of London and near the crash site, although one had to be flown to a specialist London hospital by helicopter.

The accident occurred in the middle of the rush hour just before 5:30 p.m. (1630 GMT) near the busy Watford Junction.

The commuter train had left London's Euston Station, one of the capital's main termini, some 24 minutes before the collision occurred. It was providing a local service to Milton Keynes some 80 kilometres north of London.

It was operated by North London Railways, one of the new private companies which have recently taken



Rescue workers attend the scene of a crash between a packed commuter train and a freight train in north London Thursday (Reuter photo)

over providing rail services in Britain from state-owned British Rail.

The company's commercial director Bryan Leaker said the empty train, which had been heading back to Euston, had been moving from one track to another when the accident occurred.

He said it was too soon to speculate on the cause of the crash. "All our efforts are fixed on the families and assisting the injured," he said.

The accident occurred on a railway embankment in a

residential area. It meant the closure of the main line between London and the central English city of Birmingham.

Margaret Keenan, a 14-year-old girl who was walking across a local park when the accident occurred, said: "I could see one train coming up the line towards Watford. Suddenly there was the most enormous bang and crash."

"There was a scraping sound and one carriage just turned on its side at the top of the embankment."

U.S. tries to break stalemate over election of U.N. chief

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The United States is seeking to break a stalemate over the reelection of Boutros Ghali, but faces Security Council resistance to its attempt to unseat the U.N. secretary-general.

Despite a U.S. campaign to get the issue before the Security Council, which casts the decisive vote on the secretary-general's mandate, council diplomats say it is unlikely that the process will reach a critical stage before the U.S. elections in November.

Armed with a statement from U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, U.S. Ambassador Madeleine Albright marched into a meeting of the Council's Non-Aligned members earlier this week to repeat that Washington's decision to oppose the Egyptian's reelection was irrevocable.

She stressed that contrary to what some of them might think, there was no chance that the Clinton administration would consider a compromise after the presidential election, to enable the 73-year old secretary-general to remain in the job.

But diplomats said that she ran into a roadblock notably from Egypt, which informed her that Dr. Ghali had the support of the Arab League and that in any case his mandate did not run out until the end of December.

The Non-Aligned council members are Botswana, Chile, Egypt, Guinea-Bis-

sau, Honduras and Indonesia. The two African members say they are bound by an Organisation of African Unity endorsement of Dr. Ghali.

Of the five permanent council members, China, France and Russia have lined up behind Dr. Ghali, while the British government sits on the fence, saying that he has "performed honorably."

The situation has been stalemated since Dr. Ghali announced in June that he would seek a second term, despite a U.S. threat to veto his candidacy.

The Americans have gone onto the offensive in the last two weeks, with Ms. Albright insisting at an earlier meeting with the Non-Aligned that the U.S. position would not change and that the council should bow to the inevitable.

Her spokesman James Rubin, in a parting shot before leaving to work for the Clinton campaign, warned that Washington would not tolerate any U.N. staff or funds being diverted for Dr. Ghali's reelection.

Mr. Christopher explained on July 31 to the House International Relations Committee that Washington wanted a new secretary-general to mobilise U.S. support for the United Nations, and to boost U.N. reform efforts.

Democratic Congressman Lee Hamilton informed the secretary of state at the

same meeting that congress, for its part, would only agree to pay arrears to the world body on condition that Dr. Ghali stepped aside.

Dr. Ghali, meanwhile, "is playing dead," as one diplomat put it. He is "above the fray," said another.

But his spokeswoman, Sylvana Foa, believes that he will not withdraw his candidacy. "He likes a good fight," she said.

One Security Council envoy said that Dr. Ghali's refusal to step down would serve the secretary-general's purpose, by preventing any other candidates from stepping forward until the last minute.

And supporters such as Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak are also taking up his cause — directly with U.S. President Bill Clinton during white house talks last week, according to U.N. diplomats.

A U.S. official said the Clinton administration believed "it is time to start deciding what procedures are needed to elect a new secretary-general," in order to ensure that the best alternative candidate could be found.

Security Council President Tono Eitel, of Germany, agreed Wednesday to sound out his council colleagues bilaterally on an informal basis, and is to report back on whether they feel the time is ripe to hold such a discussion.

German-made Battle of Britain mug irks veterans

LONDON (R) — A tankard commemorating the Battle of Britain has run into flak from former World War II Royal Air Force (RAF) fighter pilots, because it was made in Germany. British company Crestley Collections from Staffordshire, central England, is offering the tankard in its mail order catalogue for £34.99 (\$54). Members of the Battle of Britain Fighter Association who sent off for it admired its RAF crest and the picture of a Spitfire, the plane which became a symbol of Britain's resistance to Hitler in the dark days of 1940. Then they discovered it was not made in the pottery-making capital of England, Staffordshire's Stoke-on-Trent, but in the German town of Hilscheid, the Daily Mail reported.

Retired professor in sex videos arrested

RIO DE JANEIRO (R) — Brazilian police found 117 video recordings of a 74-year-old retired law professor having sex with prostitutes when they arrested him on drug dealing charges, a police spokesman said. The spokesman said police found 117 sex videos, as well as 92 photographs of naked women taken in the professor's apartment and three small packages of marijuana when they arrested Albino Nogueira De Faria Wednesday. Police also arrested Prof. Faria's lodger Jacqueline Da Silva, 20, who confirmed that Faria paid prostitutes to let themselves be filmed while having sex with him.

Pentagon says Pepsi suit plaintiff cannot win jet

WASHINGTON (R) — A young man suing PepsiCo Inc. to win a Harrier fighter jet will not get the plane even if he wins the lawsuit because they are not sold to the public, the Pentagon said. Spokesman Ken Bacon said the plane, which can lift straight up and then fly forward, would be quite expensive for John Leonard of Lynnwood, Washington, to operate anyway because it uses seven to 11 gallons of fuel a minute. Leonard, 21, sued Pepsi claiming he and his partners accumulated the seven million "Pepsi points" the soft drink company said in a television ad would be needed to win the fighter plane.

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Cambodia's Khmer Rouge orders 2 commanders' arrest

PHNOM PENH (R) — Cambodia's rebel Khmer



Several bicycles and one car appear covered by mud after a torrent of mud and rock swept over a crowded family campsite in the Spanish Pyrenees city of Biescas (Reuters photo)

Rescuers maintain search for more flood victims in Spain

BIESCAS, Spain (AFP) — Rescuers Friday searched for more victims of the flood disaster at a campsite in this Spanish Pyrenees town in which at least 70 people died, as controversy grew over safety conditions in the area.

Regional authorities said the number of missing could be as high as 40. But they added that a precise number was difficult to establish because it was not known how many cars had been swept away while travelling along the road beside the Las Nieves campsite.

The valley was devastated by the flash floods Wednesday evening.

"The number of victims will certainly rise as the search operation proceeds Friday," said Justice Minister Maragata Mariscal, who surveyed the area Thursday.

Officials said the campsite located at the foot of a mountain in Huesca province was crowded with between 630 to 660 vacationers, most of them Spaniards, when a torrent of mud and rocks caused by flash floods swept through washing away everything in site.

They said there were about 40 foreigners at the site, mainly from Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

Rescuers said several bodies had been located near a dam on the Gallego River, downstream from the camp.

Army soldiers joined the rescue operations which were focussing on the banks of the Gallego River where bodies could have washed up, as well as several barges along the river.

"We are doing everything



Firemen pull out a victim from water and mud after a torrent of mud and rock swept over a crowded family campsite in the Spanish Pyrenees city of Biescas (Reuters photo)

we can but we obviously have no more hope of finding survivors," said General Luis Palacios, head of the Mountain Brigade based in the town of Jaca, near Biescas.

Some of his men joined hundreds of rescuers Friday morning in combing the region, while divers searched the bed of the Gallego for more bodies.

Of the 63 bodies recovered, all but 10 have been identified, officials said. Among them are two foreign nationals, Amaya Mingo Armendariz from France and Dutch national L.A.A. Platjo Kuipers.

The Dutch consulate in Barcelona added that four

members of a Dutch family had also died.

Among the 150 injured, about 60 remained hospitalised Friday.

"The 40 people we have hospitalised here in Jaca have all lost at least one member of their family," said an army official.

Meanwhile a controversy was growing in Spain Friday over security conditions at the campsite.

Several newspapers said local authorities had no business allowing a campsite to open in such a "dangerous zone" located at the foot of a mountain and near a river and a torrent that swelled up following the torrential rains and sparked

the flash floods.

The daily El Mundo added that the weather service had warned of heavy rain in the region Wednesday, which should have prompted authorities to issue a warning.

"This was a catastrophe in the making," said Francisco Ayala, an official with the Institute of Technology and Geology, pointing out that the campsite was located in a narrow valley and in a region likely to experience flooding.

Authorities responded to the criticism saying they had taken all the necessary precautions and insisting that security was proper at the site.

Possibility of life on Mars fuels extraterrestrial imaginations

WASHINGTON (AFP) — New evidence of a possible life form on a meteorite from Mars has fired the imaginations of Americans who have long held a fascination for visitors from outer space.

Suddenly and for the first time, the possibility of life outside our planet is being officially and seriously discussed, noted an editorial in USA Today.

The U.S. talk shows have been having a field day with the hot topic, hosting UFO experts, former astronauts and eccentrics of all kinds.

President Bill Clinton raised the profile of the discovery when he declared that if the find by NASA is confirmed, it would be "one of the most stunning insights into our universe that science has ever uncovered."

He also said a special "space summit" would be convened at the White House later this year to look at how the United States should follow up on the discovery.

From there, the conclusion that we are not alone is a small leap, particularly given that 48 per cent of Americans believe UFOs are real, according to a recent survey by Newsweek magazine.

Mars occupies a particularly popular place in the American psyche, reflecting above all a fear of invaders from another world — as was revealed by the panic created when in 1938, Orson Wells narrated a fake radio broadcast of an

extraterrestrial invasion.

The fascination with all things extraterrestrial was further fuelled about 10 years later, when in Roswell, New Mexico, an official memo dated July 8, 1947 announced the discovery of a wrecked flying saucer.

The air force hours later declared the memo an error, explaining that it was merely a downed weather balloon. But many Americans believe the government was lying to cover up the discovery.

Life in outer space is a theme long popular in the United States, as evidenced by the huge popularity of such films as E.T. and Close Encounters of The Third Kind.

That interest has again taken off in the last few months. The most obvious manifestation is the extraordinarily successful film Independence Day, in which nefarious aliens plot to take over Earth, blowing up the White House in the process.

On the TV screens, meanwhile, the thirst for extra-terrestrial encounters is being fulfilled by the X-Files and other series dealing with aliens and paranormal happenings.

As science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke, author of 2001: A Space Odyssey, wrote: "Two possibilities exist: Either we are alone in the universe or we are not. Both are equally terrifying."

Burundi defiant as Rwanda joins sanctions

BUJUMBURA (R) — Rwanda said Friday it was cutting road and air links with Burundi but Burundi's military ruler said he was ready for all consequences of his coup despite the tightening noose of sanctions.

Rwanda's Tutsi-led government said it was suspending all road and air links with Burundi in line with a decision by east and central African leaders on sanctions to force a return to civilian rule.

The decision by Burundi's northern neighbour meant the only neighbouring state not to impose sanctions was Zaire, which officially closed its border with Burundi earlier this year to block refugees.

"We did this (coup) because we decided to say no to genocide in our country and we are ready to face all the consequences," retired army Major Pierre Buyoya told reporters in Bujumbura.

He repeated earlier promises to stop the three-year ethnic war between his Tutsi-dominated army and rebels of the Hutu majority and said he was ready for dialogue to promote peace.

"To bring peace to our country, we are ready for a dialogue if armed groups surrender their weapons and if they denounce their ideology of genocide and extermination," Maj. Buyoya said.

The Hutu rebels have vowed to topple him and the army by force and refuse to surrender their weapons before any talks.

Officials at state-run Air Burundi said a flight from Bujumbura to Rwanda's capital Kigali would go ahead as scheduled later Friday as they had received no notification to the contrary from Rwanda.

Maj. Buyoya and the Tutsi-dominated army toppled Hutu President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, who has been holed up in the U.S. Ambassador's residence in Bujumbura since shortly before the coup last month.

The economic blockade by Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Cameroon and Rwanda is biting increasingly hard in Bujumbura.

Some petrol stations have run out of fuel, prices of imported consumer goods and food have started climbing and fears of a hard currency shortage have fuelled a flight into dollars.

Burundi imports all its fuel and relies for 90 per cent of its revenues on coffee and tea exports, which are now blocked.

Economists say Burundians can survive sanctions for several months as they grow their own food in their landlocked country.

Parents of TWA crash victims file suit in France

PARIS (R) — The parents of three young victims of last month's TWA Flight 800 disaster have filed a lawsuit in France seeking to force U.S. investigators to disclose more about their findings, their lawyers said Friday.

The parents of Alexandre Estival, 16, Anne Lyse, 17, and Noemie Richter, 15, all of Vic-Le-Comte in central France, filed the suit with the Paris public prosecutor Thursday, a spokesman for the attorneys said.

Filed against unnamed defendants, the suit seeks a French investigation into the causes of the crash in addition to the probe being conducted by the United States.

In a letter to Justice Minister Jacques Toubon seeking his support for their suit, the attorneys said the contradictory information issued concerning the cause of the disaster had caused the parents "immense pain."

The parents "legitimately desire that light be shed on the causes of the disaster, and that this be pursued within the framework of a judicial investigation conducted on French soil," the attorneys said.

They argued the French justice system had jurisdiction over any crime committed against a French citizen aboard an aircraft, regardless of where the aircraft was registered.

The Justice Ministry and the Paris public prosecutor's office had no immediate comment.

TWA Flight 800 exploded and plunged into the Atlantic 11 1/2 minutes after taking off from New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport on July 17, en route to Paris.

All 230 passengers and crew were killed, including 42 French dead.

Investigators say the crash could have been caused by a bomb, a missile or a mechanical fault but a definitive conclusion has not been made due to a lack of conclusive physical evidence.

A week after the crash, about 20 relatives of the French victims held an impromptu news conference in New York to complain they were being given inadequate information and to urge France to join the investigation.

But the French authorities have said they were satisfied with the U.S. conduct of the crash probe.

Meanwhile, the centre of the TWA jetliner that exploded in mid-air without warning was of primary interest to investigators and aviation experts would reconstruct that part first, officials said Thursday.

More pieces of the aircraft, lying 35 metres underwater off Long Island, New York, were recovered during the day and one more body was also found, bringing the number of victims retrieved to 196 out of 230 killed in the disaster, officials told reporters.

Robert Francis, vice chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) spearheading the probe into what caused the tragedy along with the FBI, said the first piece of the Boeing 747 that would be rebuilt in an old aircraft factory hangar was 8 metres wide and 12 metres long.

"This would extend from the aft end of the forward fuselage back toward the rear of the wings," Mr. Francis said.

"This is based on an initial indication of what they're interested in. Initially, that centre part of the aircraft is the focus of interest."

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Sri Lankan rebels blast Philippine ship

COLOMBO (AFP) — Tamil guerrillas Friday attacked a Japan-bound foreign merchant vessel in Sri Lanka and killed eight more soldiers while calling for international help to end fighting, officials said.

The Philippine-registered M. V. Princess Wave was loading a cargo of ilmenite at the mineral sands factory in the northeastern port town of Trincomalee when it was attacked, shipping officials said.

They said the 21 Filipino crew were unhurt but seven local dock workers were wounded in the explosion which blew a hole in the 20,000-tonne vessel, local officials at the nearby port town of Trincomalee said.

The Sri Lankan Navy rushed gunboats to the area and were helping tow the crippled cargo ship to Trincomalee, 257 kilometres northeast of here, for repairs, officials said.

The Defence Ministry said the Tigers used an underwater explosive device to attack the ship which had been loaded with about 13,000 tonnes of ilmenite

for a Japanese consignee.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) overran a military garrison at Mullaitivu, further north of the mineral sands facility at Pulmoddai last month, and killed some 1,300 government soldiers.

Shortly after the attack, Tigers ambushed an army patrol in Trincomalee, killing eight soldiers and wounding six others for the loss of at least one of their own fighters, officials said.

The stepped up violence came as the Tigers called for international help to end a military onslaught against their political headquarters at the northern town of Kilinochchi and said some 200,000 civilians were facing starvation.

"The international community should prevail on the Sri Lankan government to stop its aggression which brings about short-term and long-term disasters to the Tamil people," the LTTE said in a statement from its London office.

It said more than 30 civilians had died in the ongoing army drive against Kilinochchi where Tiger fighters have put up stiff resistance in the past six days.

Civilians have already fled the area to other rebel-held areas.

Tigers said the refugees were faced with starvation but military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe said the guerrillas were to blame.

Brig. Munasinghe said the Tigers were blocking trucks coming into a government-held town to take back food.

Trucks carrying food and other essentials to rebel-held areas of the island's north are stopped at a de facto frontier post where the goods are loaded onto vehicles returning from Tiger-controlled areas.

The scheme had been in operation to prevent the Tigers sending back vehicles rigged up with explosives to the south of the country since a drive-by truck bombing killed 91 people at the central bank here in January.

The Defence Ministry said fighting raged in the area for the sixth straight day Friday as the Tigers kept up a fierce counter-

attack to defend the town of Kilinochchi where they have established their political headquarters.

Government troops had moved within a kilometre of the outer limits of Kilinochchi, Brig. Munasinghe said denying Tiger claims that the town had been razed by intense aerial and artillery attacks.

The army has lost a total of 49 soldiers killed and 70 seriously wounded in the past six days, Brig. Munasinghe said adding that the aim of the military was to draw out Tigers and kill them.

"We are losing men no doubt," he said. "Our objective is to draw as many terrorists as possible and kill them with the least amount of casualties to us. We are achieving that through the latest offensive."

The Tigers said they were resisting the military onslaught and gave their casualties as 51 killed. The rebels say they have killed more than 100 government troops.

India holds firm against nuclear test ban pact

NEW DELHI (R) — India showed no sign Friday of backing down on a threat to block a global treaty banning nuclear test blasts as scientists urged the government to test a controversial intermediate-range missile.

Newspapers reported that the state-run Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) had asked the government to resume tests of the intermediate-range Agni missile.

The 14-tonne, 19-metre (60-foot) long rocket with a 2,500-kilometre range has twice been tested successfully, the last time in February 1994.

India has been under pressure, particularly from Washington, to drop its missile programme which critics say exacerbates tensions with neighbours Pakistan and China.

Both Washington and Moscow expressed concern over India's earlier testing of the intermediate-range missile, saying they hoped the Agni would not be used

for military purposes.

India says the missile is a "re-entry demonstrator," not a weapons system, and part of its space programme.

It has not tested the Agni, named after the Hindu fire God, since former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao visited the United States in mid-1994 in a successful effort to strengthen ties.

The Asian Age newspaper said India could be preparing to buck international pressure over its missile programme as it has at talks in Geneva over a global nuclear test ban treaty.

"It is an indication that India may finally be gearing up to withstand U.S. pressure over its missile programme, and that it might look for an opportunity to test a nuclear warhead for its missile," the newspaper said in a front-page article.

Government officials were unavailable for comment.

India tested a nuclear device in 1974 but says it

has built no nuclear weapons and has no plans to carry out another test.

Experts believe both India and Pakistan could quickly assemble nuclear bombs.

Neighbouring China is one of five declared nuclear powers along with Britain, France, Russia and the United States.

On Thursday India's delegate to the Geneva talks warned that New Delhi could block the treaty unless the text was modified.

India wants the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) to commit the nuclear powers to a nuclear disarmament timetable.

New Delhi has also objected to a provision that would require India's ratification before the pact could enter into force — a provision Delhi views as infringing its sovereignty.

On Thursday, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher urged New Delhi not to block the treaty. Mr. Christopher told India's am-

bassador to the U.S. Naresh Chandra that even if India could not sign the treaty, it should at least not veto the pact.

Mr. Christopher wrote a letter to Indian Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral spelling out U.S. concerns over the Indian position.

U.S. Ambassador to India Frank Wisner delivered the letter Friday to Mr. Gujral in New Delhi.

Mr. Wisner told Reuters after their hour-long meeting that they had "a very thorough discussion" which extended beyond the nuclear test ban treaty to other issues of mutual importance. He declined to elaborate or say whether Mr. Gujral had shown any flexibility on the question of the nuclear test ban treaty.

Mr. Gujral also met Russian Ambassador Anatoli Drukov, but the two did not discuss the CTBT as it had already figured in a recent meeting between the two, a Russian diplomat said.

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By Dr. Musa Keilani

Strong Arab front is the need of the day

Jordanian Perspective

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein's visit to Saudi Arabia on Sunday is as much part of a major effort to reinvigorate the Middle East peace process and restart the peace negotiations on the Israeli-Syrian track as it is also aimed at bolstering Jordanian-Saudi relations.

One of the key topics to be discussed by King Hussein and Saudi Arabia's King Fahd is a proposal to convene a mini-summit of the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Jordan to closely study ways and means to unlock the stalled peace process.

Obviously, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's so-called "Lebanon first" offer as a means to revive the Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations has failed to draw Syrian interest as indicated by President Hafez Al Assad after talks with Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak in Alexandria on Wednesday.

For many optimists, the Syrian rejection of the offer as lacking a framework for peace was disappointing in that they had seen a new approach by Mr. Netanyahu, despite his headline rhetoric, to jumpstart the negotiations with Syria. The question is indeed open whether the Likud leader is willing to discuss a compromise over the Golan Heights, whose unconditional return is one of the key demands of Syria but his recent comments appear to indicate that he might be leaving the door ajar in this direction.

In any event, what is important to the Arab side at this juncture is a strong united position to confront the Israeli political manoeuvrings and as a means to avert the collapse of the peace process. Obviously, President Assad's rejection of the Lebanon-first offer in his talks in Alexandria prompted President Mubarak to fly to Jeddah and seek the Saudi weight behind his efforts to convince

the Syrian leader to consider the proposal. The marked difference between the talks King Hussein held with President Assad in Damascus on Aug. 3 and the Syrian leader's talks with Mr. Mubarak in Alexandria was the central focus of the talks. In the Damascus talks, the Lebanon-first option was definitely not the top item. It could not have been, given Jordan's other priorities such as improving the climate in bilateral ties with Syria and restoring confidence, trust and cordiality to the relationship. And King Hussein was not trying to convince President Assad to accept the Lebanon-first option either other than raising the issue as part of his discussions. If anything, it is a futile exercise for us in Jordan to judge the pros and cons of the Israeli proposal since the parameters we apply are quite different from those applied by the parties directly involved in the search for peace on the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese fronts.

At this point in time, and against the backdrop of the intense diplomatic activities that we witnessed over the past two weeks, it has become clear that there has to be a concerted effort to streamline the Arab position, taking into consideration the individual and collective interests of the various Arab parties involved in the endeavours to restore stability and security based on a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict.

A mini-summit of the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt, Palestine and Jordan could offer the right forum to explore all avenues to achieve that key objective — strengthening the Arab front and resuming the peace process from that position of strength.

One of the first priorities in this regard of course is satisfying the publicly stated positions of Syria and what is

definitely a secret agenda of President Assad. The Syrian leader is said to be seeking guarantees for the continuity of his regime as part of the price for relenting on his demand for an unequivocal Israeli declaration of intention to withdraw completely from the Golan Heights and South Lebanon as a precondition for resumed talks.

Obviously, such an Israeli declaration seems out of question at present, given the political priorities of the right-wing government in Israel. As such, a compromise has to be found in the interest of continuing the peace process towards the cherished goal of comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East.

Let us make no mistake: Mr. Netanyahu's argument that returning the Golan to Syria poses dangers to Israel's security is barely more than a cover. What he stops short of revealing is the reality that the physical territorial control of the Golan is more important to Israel as ensuring uninterrupted and free supply of water rather than a guarantee of security for the Jewish state.

But then, all countries in the immediate Middle East have water problems, and there is wide consensus within the region that these problems could not be solved bilaterally and need a regional effort based on mutual confidence and appreciation of each other's difficulties.

Again, this is an issue that should receive immediate attention as part of any effort to revive the peace process.

Needless to say, the Arab leaders preoccupied with restarting the peace process face a daunting task. But the first turning point will be a consolidated Arab front, speaking in one voice and presenting unwavering demands to Israel if the Jewish state is indeed interested in genuine peace in the region.

Lifting bread subsidies adds to burdens shouldered by public

PUBLIC CONTROVERSY over the lifting of bread and fodder subsidies, Netanyahu's policies in the occupied Palestinian territories, international terrorism and various domestic issues received special attention in the local Arabic dailies over the past week.

Immediately following the government's announcement regarding plans to lift subsidies on bread and animal feed, many commodities, including dairy products, eggs and flour vanished from the markets, said Taher Adwan, a writer for Al-Dustour. Simultaneously, the prices of most other commodities in the local stores began to rise. This created chaos and burdened the public, mainly those in low-income groups. While admitting that necessary action is due to control both excessive consumption and smuggling of bread, it must also be said that the government must step in and ensure the availability of consumer goods as well as stabilising prices in order to protect the interests of Jordanian citizens, he continued. He said that without governmental intervention and protection for the low-income groups some merchants will not end their drive to amass fortunes at other people's expense.

Fahd Al-Fanek, a writer for Al-Rai, praised government moves to control trade in foodstuffs as well as the modification of bread and animal feed subsidies. Every day of delay in implementing the government's announced plans costs the country half a million dinars, he said, because smugglers continue to hoard and smuggle away the flour and the bread, and the subsidies on bread will continue to benefit hotels, tourists, non-Jordanians and diplomats. Criticising political groups that oppose the government's plan, the writer said these groups do not realise the harm done to national interest by the continuation of the present form of subsidies. These subsidies, he continued, are burdening the Treasury which makes the state obliged to borrow more funds to meet the growing margin of deficit in the fiscal budget. Urging the government to immediately put its plan into force, the writer said the government ought to place national interest above all other considerations.

A writer for Al-Dustour criticised a statement by Minister of Public Works and Housing Abdul Hadi Al-Majali who declared that the state will assume the responsibility of producing bread for the public in order to prevent any manipulation or profiteering by bakers and other merchants. Saleh Qallab said that if the government takes upon itself the task of producing bread, this essential commodity will soon become of such bad quality that it will not be of benefit to the public in general and would not benefit the



poor either. Without any competition on the part of privately-owned bakeries, the quality of bread will soon deteriorate. The writer said if the government allows a limited number of privately-owned bakeries to continue in the bread industry, only the rich will be able to buy their products, which certainly would be of a much higher quality, from the government-operated bakeries.

While deceiving the world with false statements that it is interested in pursuing the peace process, the Israeli government is going ahead with plans that aim at achieving quite the opposite, said Mahmoud Rimawi in a column. He said by continuing the process of building Jewish settlements on Arab lands Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government is showing total disregard to the rights of the Palestinians, the peace process and the Madrid conference. Indeed the settlements constitute the main aspect of occupation of Arab territories and their existence contradict any concept of peace, he added. With these settlements, the Israelis aim at tightening the noose around the Palestinian people and eventually leading to their eviction from their own homeland, something that is totally conflicting with the idea of comprehensive peace.

In remarks at a press conference at the conclusion of his one-day visit to Jordan, Mr. Netanyahu showed total disregard to Arab rights in Palestine and expressed his government's determination to pursue efforts towards perpetuating Israel's occupation of Arab territories in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, according to Al-Dustour columnist Taher Adwan. The Jordanian people were not deceived by Mr. Netanyahu's claim that the Jewish settlements were expanding due to natural growth and every one considered the Israeli premier trying to find excuses to justify Israel's continued occupation, he said. We continue to witness Israeli malpractices such as demolishing Arab homes, imposing a closure of Arab territories, preventing the Palestinians from finding job opportunities, depriving them from any contacts with the outside world and detaining thousands of young Palestinians which together prove beyond any doubt that the present Israeli government is not interested in any peace except one of its own making and one that does not contemplate the formula of exchanging lands.

With its plans to fatten the 140 Jewish settlements in the occupied Arab lands, the Israeli government is practically ruining any chances for any genuine peace with the Palestinians, said Al-Rai's Ahmad Al-Misleh. The settlements continue to provide a concrete proof that Israel is a colonial state bent on perpetuating its occupation of other countries' territories by force in blatant defiance of the U.N. Security Council resolutions and all international principles, said the writer. Indeed, the fattening of the Jewish settlements represent a new defiance of the Arab countries and their Cairo summit resolutions that condemned Israel's settlements policy and called for the resumption of the peace negotiations on the basis of the exchange of land for peace, added the writer. He said no one can be taken in by Israel's claims that it is keen on peace with the Arabs as long as its behaviour speaks otherwise.

The majority of the Jordanian public are frustrated with the peace process as they see that the fruits of peace of which they have been promised are nothing but a mirage, said Nawaf Zaru of Al-Dustour Arabic daily. In the light of Israel's behaviour, the Jordanian people began to realise that all that was promised about the benefits of peace and prosperity for the region was mere lies, he said. Neither did the peace treaty with Israel help ease the economic crisis in Jordan nor did it help reduce the Israeli repression on the Palestinian people, said the writer. Furthermore, the planned regional projects contemplated under the peace treaty will only serve Israel and help boost its drive to perpetuate its colonisation of the Arab territories.

Once again the United States is raising the hue and cry over what it calls international terrorism prompted by the recent explosion in Saudi Arabia and the blast at the Atlanta Olympics, both of which resulted in the loss of American life, said Samir Qitami, a writer for Al-Rai. The U.S. is now trying to rally the whole world against countries considered enemies to its interests and trying to enlist the assistance of its allies in adopting hostile attitudes towards Iran, Libya, Cuba and other countries, he said. The writer noted that the United States does not follow a similar behaviour in response to acts of terrorism or the killing of innocent people in other countries around the world but it tends only to adopt such behaviour only when U.S. or Israeli interests are harmed. The writer said that terrorism emanates from within the United States which harbours all armed gangs and organised groups that have carried out 2,348 acts of terrorism inside the United States since 1994.

Why the U.S. can create jobs and Europe can't

By Robert J. Samuelson

WASHINGTON — Henry Stimson, the U.S. secretary of war in World War II, once observed that a capitalist country going to war had "better let business make money out of the process or business won't work." America followed that advice and won the war. Mr. Stimson's insight still applies in its peacetime version: Modern capitalism won't work if markets aren't left fairly free. America abides by that axiom and, as a result, is a powerful job machine. Europe does not and is a puny job machine. The mystery is that so many economists cannot understand this.

The huge job gap between the United States and Europe is, of course, well-known. From 1979 to 1995, Western Europe created less than one job for every two new workers: 10.3 million jobs for 21.5 million added workers. Unemployment jumped from 5.7 per cent to 11 per cent. Meanwhile, the United States created 26 million jobs, absorbing 95 per cent of new workers. The unemployment rate, though fluctuating over the business cycle, has not drifted up. It was 5.8 per cent in 1979 and 5.6 per cent in 1995.

What's new (and interesting) is the professed puzzlement of many economists over the job gap. Understandably, it has inspired a lot of research. Less understandably, many studies cannot explain it. Factors once rated as U.S. advantages (flexible wages, greater competition, less generous social programmes) are now deemed, on closer inspection, not to matter. Gee, this research is hard to take seriously, because it seems determined to miss the larger picture. Which is this: America's economic culture favours growth; Europe's does not.

Job creation requires three things: (1) the economy must grow fast enough so that companies want more workers; (2) hiring must be profitable — if labour costs are too high, firms will not hire even if demand is strong, and (3) people must be willing to work. On all counts, the U.S. economy outperforms the European.

Economic growth: Between 1979 and 1995, the U.S. economy grew at an annual average rate of 2.4 per cent; the European Union's econ-

omy grew only 2.1 per cent annually.

Labour costs: Europe's rise faster than America's despite higher unemployment. Between 1983 and 1993, compensation per worker (wages plus fringes) jumped 6.3 per cent annually in the EU; the comparable U.S. increase was 4.2 per cent.

Work effort: Americans work harder, because the alternative — being supported by government — is not attractive. Interestingly, initial U.S. and European unemployment benefits are similar. They typically replace about 50 to 70 per cent of an average worker's wages. But after some joblessness, U.S. benefits dwindle while European countries continue to provide support.

None of this means Europe's economy is dead. Many European firms still create new jobs with superior products. But on balance, excessive government — taxes, regulations, market controls — hobbles overall growth. Markets do not match workers and jobs.

Government does much good, from environmental regulation to unemployment insurance. But too much government or misguided government can subvert economic growth.

To conclude otherwise (as some studies do) defies common sense. One book from America's National Bureau of Economic Research says Europe's generous social policies do not foster high joblessness. The book studied various welfare policies and found little "trade-off" between "social protection and economic flexibility." A new study from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris also questions the ill effects of some European policies.

The trouble with these studies is that they try to explain too much from too little. To understand why, consider a sports analogy. Suppose basketball Team A has a tiny advantage over Team B in rebounds; it also has small advantages in steals and three-pointers. Separately, no single advantage seems decisive; together, they explain why Team A wins championships. The same is true of Europe and America. No single U.S. advantage (or European

disadvantage) matters. What counts is the collective impact.

All Europe's disadvantages feed each other. Higher labour costs (not fully offset by higher productivity) deter hiring. Steep payroll taxes — needed to pay generous social benefits — do the same. European growth also suffers from a fixed exchange-rate system that forces most countries to follow German interest rates. Without that discipline, it's feared that inflation would accelerate. In turn, this fear stems from other features of Europe's system like stronger unions, more political determination of wages and less competition in product markets.

America's advantages are also reinforcing. The business climate is more favourable than in Europe. American corporations are consistently more profitable. In 1995, U.S. companies earned an 18.3 per cent return on assets compared with 13.8 per cent for German firms. In the United States, venture capital is more available for start-up companies. Government regulation has been lifted from critical industries such as telecommunications. All the added product and profit opportunities encourage expansion. Flexible wages favour hiring.

It is the system that counts. America still embraces the market culture: its obsession with growth, its striving for wealth (and tolerance of inequality), its acceptance of change, Europe is less enthralled and more inclined to reshape market culture through government. The lesson is not that government is bad. It is not. Government does much good, from environmental regulation to unemployment insurance. But too much government or misguided government can subvert economic growth.

What Europe teaches is that the corrosion is a slow, cumulative process. Europe's efforts to reverse it (by easing regulations and limiting social benefits) will be slow, precisely because no one policy does all the harm. America ought to take heed. To work well, government needs to be used with restraint. To work well, capitalism needs to retain its central features — including the freedoms to fail and to get rich.

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Shame of torture killing

IN LEGAL terms, the killing in April 1994 of two Palestinian detainees by an Israeli security agent is a crime that cannot be ignored, pardoned or justified under any circumstances. Shin Bet agent Ehud Yatom admitted to having killed in cold blood the two Palestinians that he and a group of his colleagues arrested after their failed attempt to take some Israelis hostage.

The Israeli media reported in scary details how the Israeli security agent, who was later pardoned by the president of the state of Israel, tortured and then killed the two Palestinians. But the mute reaction by the international community to this despicable crime has been, to say the least, shocking. None of the states whose strong condemnation of "terrorism" usually is the lead story in tomorrow's newspapers even uttered a word against the brutality with which the Israeli security men treated the Palestinians who, having been arrested, were entitled to a fair trial in a country that never stops bragging about its democratic and justice-first system. Only the Israeli human rights Betsaleem organisation has urged the signatories of the International Convention Against Torture to arrest the Israeli agent if he ever lands, in their territories. Yatom can afford to detail his crime in Israel without any fear of punishment because he now stands above the law due to the presidential amnesty he has received. But the deafening silence of the international community against this crime is further proof of the hypocrisy and selectiveness in applying human rights and condemning their violators.

It is hard to imagine that this silence is not related to the nationality of the perpetrator of the crime. Likewise, it will be a cry in vain to urge the international community to pressure Israel to try the admitted killer and to take action to ensure that such a crime is not repeated. But it is necessary for the whole world to realise that, at this sensitive juncture of peace-making in the Middle East, Israelis should not be allowed to get away with murder. Peace-making requires that the same standards are applied in dealing with all the parties involved and in all issues faced. It requires a new mentality and approach whose priority is the building of new conditions and setting precedents that will convince all of the viability of peace. A peace whose foundation is built on double standards and hypocrisy will not sustain the shocks provoked by actions similar to the crime committed by Yatom, those who covered up for him and the pardon that he ultimately received from the president of the state of Israel.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE U.S. DECISION to impose penalties on foreign firms dealing with Iran and Libya was received with heavy criticism from a writer for Al-Rai, who considered it as a hostile move directed towards European nations. Mahmoud Rimawi said that the move is regarded as an extension to a previous decision taken in June of 1995 against the two Islamic nations to intimidate the Muslim countries and impose America's hegemony on our region. By acting as a sole superpower and disregarding the interests of others, the United States has not only won the hatred of the Arab and Muslim nations, but also those of its European allies, including Britain which voiced outrage at and condemnation of the move, according to the writer. He said that American President Bill Clinton took the decision without any regard or respect to the other nations' economic interests, but rather in order to please the Zionists the enemies of Arab and Islamic nations just before the American presidential elections and with the hope of securing Jewish votes. With this decision, added the writer, the United States has created unprecedented splits within the Western alliance prompting the European nations as well as Japan to threaten to deal with American firms in a similar manner.

Taher Adwan, a writer for Al-Dustour, attacked those who keep preaching about the benefits of a Jordanian-Palestinian-Israeli economic block and said this would mean Israeli hegemony over the Arab people's economic life in this region. It is not that we hate peace but it is because we reject to deal with a situation that is not based on solid peace which remains absent from the region due to Israel's intransigence and rejection to recognise Arab rights in their homeland, said the writer. "We can by no means accept a common market with Israel which has its own far-reaching ambitions in the Arab region and which continues to block trade between Palestine and Jordan," said the writer. A common market grouping the three parties could materialise only when the occupied Arab lands in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon have been liberated. Otherwise any ideas of incorporating the economies of Jordan and Palestine with that of the Jewish state remains a mere fantasy.

Beirut cat new elect

(Continued from page 1)

Damascus with senior Syrian officials headed by Vice-President Abd Halim Khaddam in charge of the Lebanese dossier after the court ruling.

Syria is the main foreign power broker in Lebanon where it has deployed 35,000 troops.

The polls are due to be held on five consecutive Sundays, starting from Aug. 15. They will be the first parliamentary election since 1992 in Lebanon, a country recovering from a 15-year war which ended in 1990. Lebanon has always been a country of technical administrative reasons.

The Christian community largely boycotted the elections on the ground that free and fair elections could not be held in presence of the 35,000 Syrian troops deployed across two-thirds of Lebanon. The Washington-based Human Rights Watch meanwhile denounced Lebanese government "arbitrarily" attempts to prevent citizens from exercising their right to freedom.

Save Every d

Features

King visits Saudi Arabia tomorrow

(Continued from page 1)

Syrian-Israeli negotiations by suggesting a so-called Lebanon first option.

The Israeli-Palestinian track of negotiations also remain stalled following the election of Mr. Netanyahu, a hardliner who rejects the return of occupied Arab territories, as prime minister in May.

King Hussein held talks with President Assad in Damascus on Aug. 3 and Israel's "Lebanon-first" offer was believed to have been discussed during the talks.

On Wednesday, President Assad, after talks with President Mubarak in Alexandria, publicly rejected the proposal saying it did not include a framework for peace. He insisted on the linkage between the Syrian and Lebanese tracks of negotiations with Israel.

Obviously prompted by his failure to convince the Syrian leader to consider the offer, President Mubarak flew to Jeddah on Thursday in an apparent bid to enlist Saudi support for the effort.

After talks with King Fahd in the Saudi Red Sea port city, Mr. Mubarak told reporters that he and the Saudi monarch were "in full agreement...on the importance of a just and complete Middle East peace as a strategic option."

He affirmed that the talks focused on "the resumption of the peace process on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. Egyptian-Saudi coordination on this matter and the commitment (with respect to) the basis of the peace process."

Reports meanwhile said a proposal was being floated to convene a summit of the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Jordan to strengthen the Arab front in peace negotiations with Israel.

According to the reports, the summit could be held next week in Alexandria.

Jordanian sources could not confirm the reports. But, according to diplomatic sources, Arab leaders agreed during the last full Arab summit held in Cairo in June that concerned Arab heads of state should meet whenever the need

arose to discuss the Middle East peace process or any other issue of mutual concern.

An Egyptian official was quoted as saying on Friday that his country had begun secret contacts with Israel aimed at finding a compromise likely to lead to a resumption of the Syrian-Israeli peace talks.

The official, quoted by Agence France Presse on condition that he was not identified, said Israel was "trying to convince Egypt of its Lebanon-first option so Cairo will persuade Damascus to accept it in turn."

According to Israel Radio, Mr. Netanyahu's top foreign policy advisor Dore Gold made a hush-hush visit to Egypt late Thursday for talks with Mubarak aide Osama Al Baz.

But the official refused to confirm Mr. Gold's visit or whether it was part of the new contacts, saying: "Discretion is sometimes needed to give efforts aimed at relaunching the peace process a chance of success."

"Egypt is trying to find a compromise formula between the two parties (Syria and Israel) which would unblock the situation without abandoning the principle of land-for-peace," the official said.

He could not, however, give details on the type of compromise being sought, AFP said.

Mr. Mubarak said Wednesday after meeting Dore Gold that a large gap remained between Israel and Syria and that he hoped an understanding could be reached.

Quoted Friday by the government daily Al-Masaa, Mr. Mubarak said he recently received a message from Mr. Netanyahu stressing his commitment to implement peace accords and resume negotiations on the Syrian track.

"Syria does not accept the Lebanon-first principle but believes the solution must concern Syria and Lebanon together, and that the issue forms a coherent whole that it is difficult to divide," Mr. Mubarak was quoted as saying.

Beirut cabinet adopts new election law

(Continued from page 1)

Damascus with senior Syrian officials headed by Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam, in charge of the Lebanese dossier, after the court ruling.

Syria is the main foreign power broker in Lebanon where it has deployed 35,000 troops.

The polls are due to be held on five consecutive Sundays starting from Aug. 18. They will be the first parliamentary elections since 1992 in Lebanon, still recovering from a 15-year war which ended in 1990.

Lebanon has always held elections on consecutive Sundays for technical and administrative reasons.

The Christian community largely boycotted the last elections on the grounds that free and fair polls could not be held in the presence of the 35,000 Syrian troops deployed across two-thirds of Lebanon.

The Washington-based Human Rights Watch meanwhile denounced the Lebanese government's "arbitrary" attempts to prevent citizens from exercising their right to freedom of

association. The group, in a letter addressed to Interior Minister Murr, expressed "grave concern" over the ministry's refusal to accept registration papers of several non-governmental associations, notably the Lebanese Association for the Democracy of Elections (LADE).

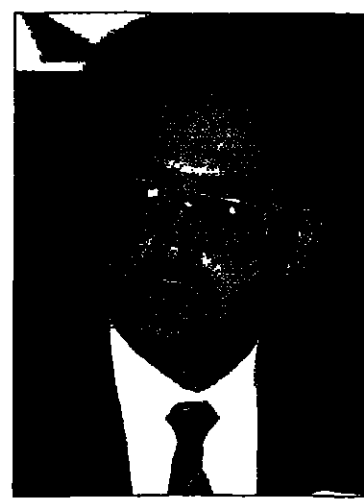
The association — founded by journalists, academics and other well-known figures — was formed earlier this year to monitor the upcoming parliamentary elections and the electoral process leading up to the vote.

The international human rights organisation called on Mr. Murr to "take measures to ensure that Lebanese citizens are not arbitrarily obstructed in their efforts to form associations in accordance with the Lebanese law."

The ministry of interior had refused to authorise the activities of the association under the pretext that government agencies were the only guarantee for democratic elections and "will not accept to be replaced in this mission by candidates (to the elections) or people close to candidates."

The story of telecommunications in Jordan

By Jamal Saraireh



Other Services:

TCC provides the Telex, Telegraph and Leased Lines services.

Network Investment and Utilisation:

The current telecommunications network operated by the Telecommunications Corporation has not received sufficient investment to allow for essential expansion or high quality development. As a result of the lack of investment due to the recession in Jordan between 1989 and 1993, no major switching equipment was installed. The available transmission capacity has remained at the same level since 1987, apart from some minor expansion. Because of the lack of significant recent expansion to cater for increased demand, the existing network is almost fully utilised. The utilisation factor of the network in most cases exceeds 90 per cent, which is a very high percentage.

In addition to the virtually full utilisation of the network between exchanges, TCC believes that there is also a substantial unsatisfied demand for basic telephone service.

Development Plans:

TCC had prepared a long-term 15-year plan to solve the accumulated problems and to meet the country's growing telecommunication needs. The government has approved the first phase of this plan, the National Telecommunications Programme (NTP) for the period 1994 to 1998. The programme has already started and it will implement the state-of-the-art technologies in the field of telecommunications. For instance the digital exchanges and the remote subscriber units will have signalling No. 7 facilities (SS#7), which allow the possibility of providing Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) to the customers.

Regarding the transmission network, the Synchronous Digital Hierarchy (SDH) technology will be implemented to provide high transmission speeds (reaching 2.5

Gb/s). As transmission media, optical fiber cables (more than 1,500 kms total length) and digital radio microwave systems will be used.

The number of basic telephone access lines will be doubled within the next three years to approximately 800,000 lines by installing 29 digital exchanges and 140 remote subscriber units. This will enable TCC to meet the projected level of demand for the year 2000, resulting in a telephone density of around 12 per cent.

The second phase, scheduled for the period 1999 to 2010, will continue with the development and expansion of the telecommunications services. This phase is composed of the following major projects:

- Replacement of existing analogue exchanges with digital ones.
- Replacement of existing digital exchanges at the end of their economic life.
- Expansion of the basic telecommunications network to reach a capacity of more than 1,350 million lines through the provision of new exchanges.

Installation of regional optical fiber links to connect Jordan with the neighbouring countries: Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine and Israel.

Along with the expansion of the network and the corporate restructuring process, the basic telecommunications infrastructure will be modernised to a fully digital infrastructure using state-of-the-art switching equipment and transmission facilities. During this same period, TCC's tariffs will be re-balanced and/or restructured to ensure that prices to end users and interconnection charges to other service providers are fair and reflect cost.

The Private Sector Opportunities:

The government is committed to modernising and liberalising its telecommunications sector to cope with the country's vision of becoming the hub of the new Middle East. As part of this process, new laws have been introduced to encourage private sector investment in all sectors. This includes the Telecommunications Law which establishes a Telecommunications Regulatory Commission.

A Telecommunications Policy Department has been established in the Ministry of Post and Communications. The department is in charge of recommending the general policy for the telecommunications sector and developing this policy to meet the needs of economic and social development of the country, and to create a competitive environment so as to ensure state-of-the-art telecommunication services at acceptable costs and affordable prices.

The department is also responsible for representing Jordan in international fora related to telecommunications, i.e. states, international specialised committees, unions etc.

The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission is charged with providing a transparent regulatory framework, independent of the operators, thus permitting a fair and effective competitive environment. The commission is responsible for licensing companies wishing to provide telecommunication services, enforcing licensing, regulating prices, ensuring interconnection to promote the development of new and competitive services and setting technical standards.

TCC, which until recently had a monopoly on the provision of basic telecommunication services, will be commercialised, corporatised and eventually privatised under the new law. The government's goal is to privatise TCC within few years and permit competition in various aspects of telecommunications. The current situation can be concluded as follows:

— TCC is undergoing a process of transformation into a company wholly owned by the government, in accordance with the Jordanian Companies Law, a step towards privatisation.

— Privatisation options are still under discussion, as well as the valuation of TCC. We expect the privatisation to take place within the next two years.

— The privatisation will, most probably, take a form of IPO + Strategic Partner. Schedule and further details will be developed in due time.

— According to the Jordanian Investment Law, the foreign share must not exceed 49 per cent of the company's stock.

For the rest of the telecommunications sector, the government has decided to introduce a second cellular operator by year 1998, a second paging operator immediately, three operators for pay phones with permission to utilise the Wireless Local Loop to cover 3 per 1000 inhabitants by year 1999 and three operators to run trunked mobile radio systems (dispatch). All those licences will be granted according to the following conditions:

— Licences will be granted through open competition.

— Bidders must have the status of public companies (as defined by the Companies' Law) or commit themselves to become so after winning the licence and before providing the service.

— The winners should put forward at least 40 per cent of their stock for public offering at Amman Financial Market.

The Regulatory Commission is in the process of preparing terms and conditions for competition in the above-mentioned services. A tender to license the second paging operator will be announced within few months.

The writer is minister of post and communications. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICES were first offered during the early 1930s in Trans-Jordan under the supervision of the Post and Telegraph Department. Cable and Wireless Ltd. assisted in the development of telecommunication services by developing international connections. After the foundation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan the Ministry of Posts, Telegraph and Telephony was established to further develop telecommunication services.

In 1961, the first automatic telephone service was introduced, utilising an electro-mechanical switch with a capacity of approximately 5,000 lines. Further exchanges were constructed to supplement the system. In 1966 the association with Cable and Wireless Ltd. was terminated and the Ministry of Posts, Telegraph and Telephony assumed responsibility for the system.

By 1971, which saw the establishment of the Telecommunications Corporation (TCC) as a government-controlled entity under the Law No. 29, Jordan was served by various telecommunications services such as telephone, telegraph and telex and was operating a satellite earth station in Baqa'a using Intelsat facilities.

From 1973 to 1985, the telecommunications network was expanded significantly under three successive government investment plans in response to increasing demand.

Between 1987 and 1992 Jordan suffered a recession and this affected the ability of TCC to obtain government funding to renovate and develop the telecommunications network, which was then starting to come under severe pressure as a result of increasing demand. This pressure was exacerbated by further demand for telephone services following the return of Jordanian expatriates during the Gulf crisis in 1990/91.

A fourth significant development programme had already been deferred due to the difficult economic environment preceding the onset of that recession. It was not until 1993 that the government was able to initiate a further development programme which has evolved into the National Telecommunications Programme. The programme is now under implementation and is expected to increase the penetration ratio from 7.8 to 12 lines per 100 inhabitants.

Telecommunications Services

Basic Telephone Service:

TCC's telephone services comprise public telephone network services and public pay-phones. Operating revenue from telephone service accounted for approximately 92 per cent of the TCC's operating revenues in 1994.

TCC is currently the sole provider and operator of the basic telephone service in Jordan with a monopoly over business and residential telephones, offering local,

national and international services. These services form the core business of TCC. Recently TCC has an approximately 4,000 staff, including 332 engineers and 1,852 technicians. TCC has now a total of approximately 353,000 working telephone lines.

TCC is a signatory of the Arabsat and Intelsat satellite consortia and operates three satellite earth stations, one on the Arabsat system, and the other two on Intelsat (Atlantic and Indian Oceans satellites). The two Intelsat stations incorporate digital technology.

TCC purchases switching, transmission and cabling equipment from a number of suppliers. Procurement of this technology is principally by means of open international tenders.

Suppliers of switching equipment have included Alcatel, Fujitsu and Siemens. Suppliers of transmission equipment have included Siemens, NEC, Telettra, Italtel and TRT. There are many suppliers of cable from different countries. TCC periodically updates its requirements in order to satisfy demand for modern telecommunications technology and to comply with international recommendations.

Mobile Telephone Services:

Jordan Mobile Telephone Services (JMTS) has already established a countrywide GSM cellular network, with Motorola Inc. of the United States acting as a contracted operator. Under the licence agreement JMTS has a monopoly on mobile services during the first four years of a 15-year licence period. The agreement provides that 20 per cent revenue sharing will be paid to the government.

The service started on commercial basis in September 1995 and the current number of subscribers is about 20,000. A decision has been taken by the government to introduce another operator by the end of 1998.

Paging Service:

A licence has been granted to the Jordan Radio Paging Co. (JRP) to operate and provide paging service to the public. The number of subscribers is about 7,500.

Recently the government has decided to introduce a second competitor.

Data Services:

SPRINT has been the first company to be granted a licence to provide public data services in Jordan. The competition is open for the provision of such services. To date, five data operators have been licensed to provide data services to the public. These are:

- SPRINT Jordan
- Connet Trade & Contracting
- Global Telecommunications Engineering Co.
- Middle East Communications
- First Telecommunications Group Co.

Israel links peace talks with closure of deputy's office

(Continued from page 1)

The daily Haaretz reported Friday that Mr. Netanyahu was no longer seeking, however, the closure of the Orient House.

Haaretz said Mr. Netanyahu's government had warned the Palestinians that unless the offices are closed, it will seek to block passage in the U.S. Congress of a \$10 million emergency aid package for the PNA.

The aid package is expected to come before the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee on Thursday but could be delayed by committee Chairman Benjamin Gilman, a friend of Mr. Netanyahu, the newspaper reported.

In the West Bank town of Hebron, meanwhile, some 30 supporters of Israel's dovish Meretz Party demonstrated to demand that Mr. Netanyahu fulfill Israel's commitment under the peace accord to pull troops out of 80 per cent of the city.

Israel's defence minister reportedly is drawing up plans under which soldiers would remove bases from Arab neighbourhoods of Hebron, but reserve the right to patrol there.

In the Gaza Strip, about 100 Palestinians protested against an Israeli plan to confiscate land near the Jewish settlement of Morag for road construction. Protesters said the land belongs to a Palestinian farmer.

Mr. Arafat is to chair a

meeting of his Fateh movement in Cairo on Saturday to discuss efforts to relaunch the peace process with Israel, a

Palestinian envoy said. Mohammad Sobehi, Palestinian delegate to the Arab League, said 16 members of Fateh's Central Committee would attend the meeting, which will open Saturday and close on Sunday.

They will focus on "ways to confront recent measures taken by the Israeli government to relaunch Jewish settlement building in the Palestinian territories, and the results of Mr. Arafat's intense diplomatic activity over recent weeks to relaunch the Israeli-Palestinian peace process."

Mr. Arafat will be in

Cairo for talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The Palestinian leader travelled to Jordan on Wednesday to discuss his concerns for the peace process with King Hussein.

Mr. Sobehi said Palestinian leaders asked Cairo to host the Fateh meeting to ensure several headline members, who refuse to travel to the self-ruled Gaza Strip, will attend.

Since taking office in June, Mr. Netanyahu has dispatched his top foreign policy advisor, Dore Gold, and Foreign Minister David Levy for talks with Mr. Arafat and other top Palestinian officials, but formal negotiations have yet to be opened.

Iraq ready to start oil exports

(Continued from page 1)

taken before the first easing of the oil embargo since it was imposed on Iraq after its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"The first step is to appoint officials in New York tasked with approving oil contracts, then to set up in Iraq a communications network linking these experts to Iraq's oil authorities and to international inspectors posted at oil terminals," he said.

Four oil experts from France, Norway, Russia and the United

States are to check contracts at U.N. headquarters in New York, while 14 international inspectors must be stationed

at oil pumping terminals in Iraq and Turkey to monitor exports.

The third step is to deploy monitors to check the arrival of humanitarian supplies, while observers are to confirm the equitable distribution of the food and medicine.

U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali will then inform the Security Council that preparatory steps have been completed, after which the deal can come into force.

The oil-for-food deal is a temporary exception to help ease the suffering of the Iraqi people. The oil embargo is to remain in force until Iraq has complied with U.N. disarmament resolutions dating from the 1991 Gulf war.

Netanyahu hits political crises

(Continued from page 1)

was forced to resign after a police investigation was opened into allegations he obstructed justice in a long-standing legal case against the head of the influential ultra-orthodox Shas party, Ariele Deri.

Mr. Neeman denied any wrongdoing but said he could not remain justice minister until he was officially cleared of the allegations.

Mr. Netanyahu's efforts to name a caretaker justice minister pending conclusion of the probe into Mr. Neeman ran into trouble Friday

when Shas, which has 10 seats in parliament, rejected suggestions the job go to Finance Minister Dan Meridor, a secular moderate.

Mr. Netanyahu has been beset by political squabbling since the day he took office at the head of a complex coalition grouping centrist, far-right nationalists and ultra-orthodox religious parties.

Mr. Levy, a long-time political rival, has caused many of the problems himself, notably threatening on two occasions to resign if right-wing hardliner Ariel Sharon was not given a powerful cabinet post.

Save water!

Every drop counts...

AFM seen recovering slowly

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Prices and turnover rose at the Jordan stock exchange last week amid expectations of increased industrial exports to Iraq and the Palestinian territories, brokers said Friday.

They said the market was taking heart from signs that the U.S. was dropping its objections to an Iraqi agreement with the United Nations for limited sales of oil to buy food and medicine and a promise by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he would remove all hurdles in Jordanian exports to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The weekly report of the Amman Financial Market (AFM) said trading during the week ending Thursday was worth 6.3 million dinars compared with the previous week's 2.3 million dinars.

Average daily trading was 1.3 million dinars last week (five days of business) compared with the previous week's (four days of business) 600,000 dinars, the report said.

The report said 5.5 million shares changed hands under 3,630 deals concluding during the week. The official AFM share price index based on 60 major companies closed at 139.84 points, up 3.01 points or 2.2 per cent from the week's opening of 136.83 points.

Sectoral indices showed that stocks of commercial banks and financial institutions closed with a 1.1 per cent gain, services sector shares with 2.25 per cent and industrials with 3.9 per cent. Insurance stocks closed after dipping by 1.7 per cent.

Industrials accounted for the bulk of the weekly volume with a turnover of 4.63 million dinars (\$6.52

million), followed by commercial banks and financial institutions with 1.6 million dinars (\$2.25 million), services sector shares with a turnover of 620,000 dinars (\$874,200) and insurance stocks with 41,000 dinars (\$57,800).

Stocks of 90 companies were involved in the week's trading, with 57 of them closing with gains, 23 losing and 10 remaining unchanged.

Brokers noted that it was the first time in several weeks that the market was showing signs of recovery. "The market should have done much better since the beginning of June against expectations of a cut in interest rates as promised by the government, but the reduction did not materialise throughout June and July," said a broker.

The Central Bank of Jordan last week announced a fresh issue of three-month and six-month certificates

of deposits with 9.5 per cent and 9.25 per cent yields. The issuance came contrary to expectations that the government would move to cut interest rates.

High-yield short-term bonds had been drawing capital away from the market floor, accounting partially for the stagnation in the bourse as a result of tight liquidity.

On the other hand, contributing to the rise in share prices were indications that Iraq and the United Nations were close to an accord on the proposed limited oil sales. This meant increased Jordanian industrial exports to Iraq.

Investors' expectations came true when the U.S. announced Wednesday that it was approving the Iraq-U.N. agreement.

Another factor soothing the market was a promise made by Mr. Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, that he would work to

remove bureaucratic hurdles in the way of Jordanian exports to the Palestinian market through Israeli-controlled territory.

This also meant an improvement in the market conditions for dozens of Jordanian industrial firms which have already received exports orders from the Palestinians or are negotiating deals.

"On the whole, the market is slowly taking an upward turn after a stagnation of several months," noted a broker, who, like other AFM dealers, cannot be identified by name under standing bourse guidelines.

"Activity should pick up and prices should continue to recover as and when commercial bank interest rates come down," added the broker.

Egypt to put 100 projects to Mideast economic summit

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt said Friday it would put forward some 100 projects to a Middle East and North African economic summit to be held in Cairo in November.

Finance Minister Moheï Eddin Al Gharib said the projects, currently being studied, mainly related to the cement and sugar industries as well as the reclamation of desert land in western Egypt.

Mr. Gharib told the government daily Al-Ahram that the Nov. 12-14 conference followed on from "successful economic talks in Washington" carried out by President Hosni Mubarak last week.

Before President Mubarak's U.S. visit, Cairo suggested that the holding of the third annual economic conference depended on progress in the Arab-Israeli peace process, which has been deadlocked since the right-wing came to power in Israel.

Since the Egyptian president's return, however, Egyptian officials have made a series of comments making it clear the government has dropped its condition.

A total of 3,000 businessmen as well as leaders from 85 countries are expected at the conference to be held under the slogan "Construction for the Future."

The first Middle East and North Africa conference aimed at boosting economic cooperation and there-

fore peace between countries in the region including Israel was held in Casablanca, Morocco, in 1994. Last year's gathering took place in Amman.

Meanwhile, the United States is making a serious effort to bring "a large and strong" delegation to the Cairo economic summit this November. Undersecretary of Commerce Stuart Eizenstat told an audience at the American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt last week.

"The Cairo summit will be an important contribution to sustaining momentum behind the Middle East peace process in which Egypt has been a leader," Mr. Eizenstat commented, adding that the U.S. delegation would be led by Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Commerce Secretary Kantor.

Egyptian Ambassador to Israel, Mohammad Bassiouny said last week that he believed the summit will be linked to the restarting of talks between Israel and Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians, the Jerusalem Post reported.

There had been speculation recently that Egypt might cancel the summit unless Israel showed signs of resuming talks. No such ultimatum has been officially issued, but according to Mr. Bassiouny, "the idea of the summit is to show the fruits of peace. How can there be economic cooperation without peace?"

Gulf oil states prepare for Iraqi exports

DUBAI (R) — Middle East oil states are confident that the return of Iraq to world markets for the first time in six years will not dent their crucial petrodollar earnings or crimp their market share, industry sources said Thursday.

"All in all, the market can take the oil. Prices are resilient," one Gulf-based official said.

The stakes are high for leading exporters Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait, which are heavily dependent on oil income and have taken up Iraq's market share in the last six years, particularly lucrative Asian markets.

Riyadh's oil earnings swung \$2.7 billion and Tehran's swung \$1 billion with every \$1 change in oil prices, bankers in Saudi Arabia and oil officials in Tehran said.

Both countries rely on hard currency oil sales to provide more than 70 per cent of their total revenue.

Iraqi oil could hit the market within four weeks, adding more than 700,000 barrels per day (bpd) to world supply — approximately one per cent of glob-

al daily output — from export terminals in the Mediterranean and the Gulf.

Under the deal, Iraq is allowed to sell \$2 billion worth of its oil over six months to pay for food and other humanitarian supplies. The deal can be renewed.

Under an Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) agreement reached in June, Iraq has a supply quota of 1.2 million bpd.

Traders have long been expecting oil prices to dip on Iraq's return but a combination of strong U.S. heating fuel demand and unexpected supply disruptions has fanned prices \$2 higher since the oil-for-food deal was signed in May.

The reference price used by OPEC stood at \$19.58 a barrel this week compared to August 1995's average of \$15.95.

"The price is satisfactory right now. Even with the reentry of Iraqi crude the market would be strong," Iranian Oil Minister Gholamreza Aghazadeh said in a statement Wednesday. International benchmark

dated Brent crude was trading at \$19.80 a barrel on Thursday.

Gulf states are likely to suffer only slight losses in their share of Far East and Asian markets when Iraq begins exports some 350,000 bpd from its Mina Al Bakr export terminal in the northern Gulf, Gulf oil traders said.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Iran have boosted sales to Japan by one million bpd to 2.4 million bpd since 1990, data from Japan's ministry of international trade and industry shows.

Japanese energy firms, which imported 3.6 million bpd, or close to 80 per cent of all their requirements, from the Gulf have so far been slow to secure Iraqi contracts because of lingering concerns about the operational state of Mina Al Bakr.

Other exporters — notably Russia — would feel the pressure of Iraq's return more than many Gulf states because of a provision in the oil-for-food deal that the "larger share" of the exports be sold in the Mediterranean rather than the Gulf.

"Most of the (Iraqi) oil

will go through Turkey. So the real price pressure will be on the Mediterranean... (Russian) Urals crude will suffer," a trader based in the Gulf said.

Meanwhile, OPEC countries broke their own self-imposed production ceiling in July, but robust demand and lower production from rival producers allowed the group to enjoy higher than expected earnings, analysts said.

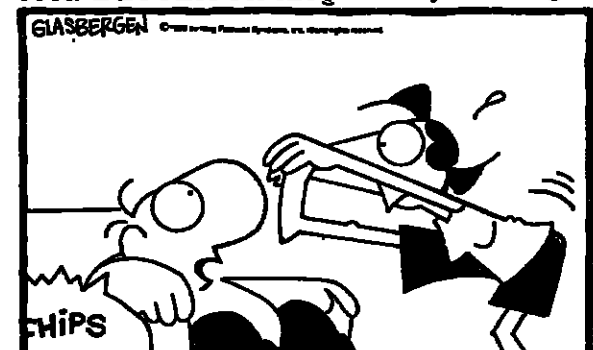
A Reuters survey of oil analysts, industry officials and OPEC delegates showed that OPEC members pumped 25.86 million barrels per day (bpd) in July, up 90,000 bpd from a revised 25.77 million in June and well over their 25.03 million bpd ceiling.

The need to replenish very low oil inventories and a delay in the implementation of a United Nations deal to allow OPEC member Iraq to sell some oil meant the market has easily absorbed the extra OPEC oil, traders say.

But analysts say prices could tumble if Iraq's return to world oil markets dovetails with higher production from the North Sea and other non-OPEC sources.

"With OPEC production continuing to creep upwards, we strongly suspect that prices have already peaked... (Iraq's return) would obviously accelerate the expected decline," oil analysts at Kleinwort, Benson said.

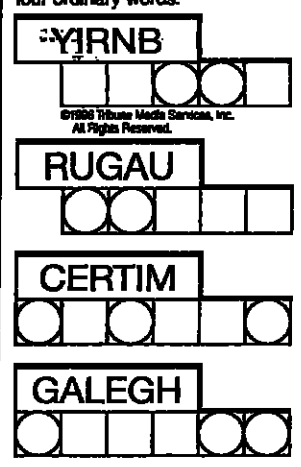
THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"Why would you want buns of steel? Isn't it more comfortable to sit on buns of marshmallow?"

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Answer here: AT

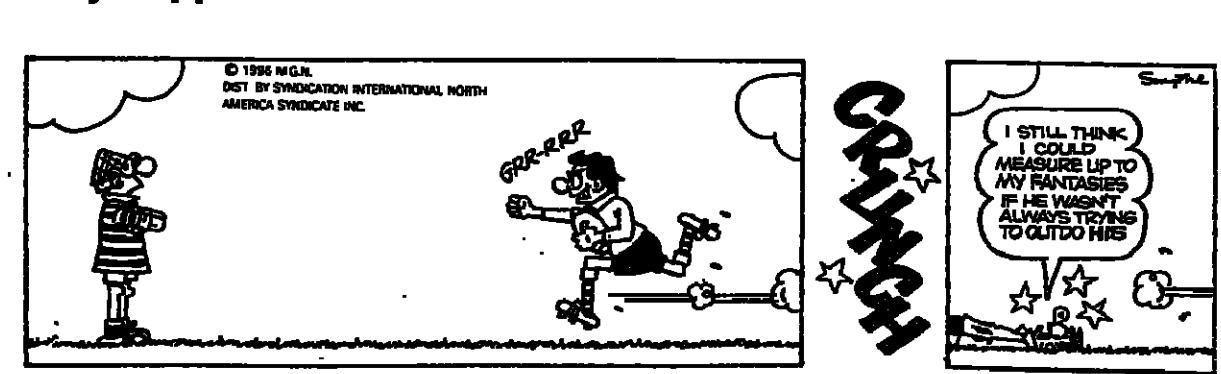
Yesterday's Jumbles: BAGGY AGATE ANSWER ELICIT

Answer: An unused computer can become this — A WEB SITE

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SATURDAY AUGUST 10, 1996

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Study into periodicals today and see experts who can be helpful to you in your career activities. Become more dynamic and purposeful in whatever task is given to you and you will gain great success in the days ahead.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 21) This is a good day today for improving yourself and to study use of spare time. Increase happiness in the days ahead and spend this evening with your loved ones and you can all have a wonderful time together.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) There is much to make of your home today, so get busy at it and you can make your residence a place which you would be proud to invite important guest into. Entertain old friends and have a fine time together.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Call or see persons who need cheering up today and would love to see you. Bring along candy or flowers in your visit and you will make a great impression on them. This evening should be spent with close friends.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) This is a day today to reach a person today you want to see more of and get together, especially when it involves your career activities. Have a very enjoyable evening with some close friends and you can make it a most pleasant time.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Small talks require your attention today and you handle it efficiently in such a manner that you can gain the success you desire. Remember some small favour your mate asks can be accommodated and shows much affection on your part.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Get in touch with good friends today and show you are still devoted to them being in your life. Join a group affair of your interest and show that you have social responsibilities which can be provided to others.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Get into civic duties today which you have been neglecting and thereby you can make a good impression on someone in authority. Study ways to have more prestige in public this evening by consulting some knowledgeable person.

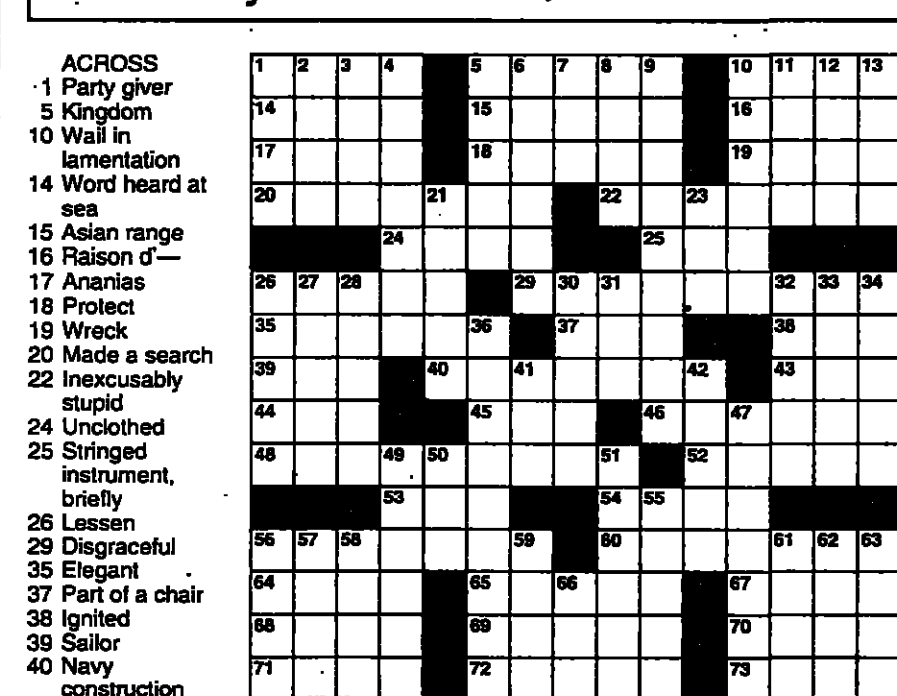
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to Jan. 20) This is the day today for recreation you have been looking forward to for some time. Be where you can meet interesting people and have stimulating conversations with those who can increase your success.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This is a good day today to handle practical and financial affairs which have been put aside for sometime. Make collections and pay those bills which have become due. Then later tonight you can see a close friend.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Talks plans today over with an associate who has some constructive ideas for your career activities. You can handle any civic tasks which needs to be completed by you for the days ahead and which can bring your prestige.

Birchstone of August: Peridot — Gilded Quartz

THE Daily Crossword by James Barrick



A review of news from the Arabic press

Energy			* JOD Cross Rates		
Commodity	Last	Delivery	Currency	Buy	Sell
Coffee (c/lbs)	122.83	Spot	US Dollar	0.708	0.710
	122	Spot	GB Sterling	1.0917	1.0972
Sugar (5/ton)	365	Spot	DE Mark	0.4764	0.4788
	365	Spot	CHF Franc	0.5888	0.5879
Soya (c/lbs)	23.88	Spot	FR Franc	0.1388	0.1405
Wheat (c/lbs)	23.88	Spot	IT Lira	1.055	0.0552
Barley (5/bsh)	3.54	Spot	NL Guilder	0.4246	0.4257
			JP Yen	0.0076	0.0077

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PARALLEL MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (03/08/1996 - 07/08/1996)

WEEKLY REPORT

THE LAST WEEKS	COMPANY NAME	P/S	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACT	NO. OF SHARES EXERCISED	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE MARKET SHARE	TURNOVER SHARES
LOW													
0	.510 CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	24.9	0.00	26	75200	15100	.54	.62	.55	.62 + .08		.600	.764
0	.620 JOR. TRADE FAC.	17.1	0.00	32	21850	15410	.47	.64	.63	.64 + .02		.634	.806
0	.470 HALL, CONSUM. CENTER	-	0.00	6	2244	2018	.47	.66	.64	.64 + .03		.650	.045
0	.350 AMER FIN. INVEST.	-	0.00	88	95700	56932	.56	.61	.57	.61 + .05		.895	.997
0	.700 OCEAN INV. 90*	71.7	0.00	91	238200	57512	.71	.78	.70	.78 + .06		.233	1.174

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Adnan Aboudi in special chair trains for the Paralympics to be held in Atlanta. Behind Aboudi stand His Royal Highness Prince Firas Ben Ra'd (right) and coach Fawzi Zard (2nd left) and assistants

Jordan's Paralympics team to leave Sunday for Atlanta with high hopes

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Out of Jordan's keenness to participate in international sport events, Jordan's athletics team for the disabled is expected to leave Sunday for Atlanta to take part in the paralympics. His Royal Highness Prince Firas Ben Ra'd told the Jordan Times.

He said that the team, four track and field athletes and one weightlifter, is ready to meet new challenges after exercising in a training camp for a month and everything indicates that the team can achieve good results and win some medals.

"We have been preparing for this moment since our last participation in Germany four years ago and this year in Atlanta we are sure of getting good results and win some medals," he said.

Accompanying the team, beside Prince Firas, is the experienced coach Fawzi Zard who told the Jordan Times that the team is in its utmost shape to secure a new record for Jordan.

"Paralympics is run back to back with the Olympics and this year there are around 120 countries participating in Atlanta and we hope with the preparations and training we can bring home some medals," he told the Jordan Times.

The most experienced athlete in the Jordanian team, Mohammad Ata, who came in fifth in the Berlin games four years ago, told the Jordan Times that the support from Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, Prince Firas, the coach and the federation was indispensable for the athletes.



Mohammad Ata trains for Atlanta games

"The support from Prince Ra'd and Prince Firas, our coach and others gave us the will to overcome our disabilities and to be an integral part of this society," he said.

Three-thousand and five hundred athletes will take part in this year's Paralympics which will start on Aug. 15 and will continue until Aug. 25.

Seles struggles to beat Sabatini in Montreal

MONTREAL, Canada (R) — After a seesaw first set, top seeded Monica Seles of the United States took control and defeated ninth seeded Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina 7-6 (7-4) 6-1 Thursday to move into the quarterfinals of the \$926,250 Canadian Open.

Other third-round winners included number two seed Arantxa Sanchez Vicario of Spain, 7-5, 6-1 over South African Amanda Coetzer, and unseeded players Yayuk Basuki of Indonesia, Argentine Florencia Labat and Kimberly Po of the U.S.

Number 13 seed Amy Frazier of the U.S. surprised by defeating number eight seed Mary Pierce of France 6-3 6-3 and sixth-seeded Magdalena Maleeva of Bulgaria won 6-3 3-2 retired over Jennifer Capriati when the unseeded American had to retire with a gluteal strain on her left side.

After trailing 3-5 in the first set, Sabatini rallied and to a 4-2 lead in the tie break. But then she double-faulted at 4-2 and again at 4-5 before Seles won the set

with a cross-court forehand winner.

"I missed a couple of easy shots in those moments," Sabatini said about what happened at 4-2 in the tie break. "It just shows that I need to play more tournaments to play better in these matches."

"It was frustrating for me," said Seles. "Because the first set started to remind me of losing to Jana Novotna (of the Czech Republic) at the Olympics and Katarina Stutenikova (of Slovakia) at Wimbledon. I was ahead 5-3 in the that set just like the Olympics and Wimbledon and then Gabby came back. I've got to play good tennis when I'm ahead, not just when I'm behind."

Sanchez Vicario received treatment for a strained forearm muscle from the WTA tour trainer leading 3-2 in the first set of her match against Coetzer, a baseline battle that slipped away from the number 15-ranked South African in the last two games when she missed on a few attacking shots after coming back from a 3-5 deficit.

Sanchez Vicario's injury dates to an early-round match at Wimbledon in late June.

"The trainer put some tape on it and it felt better," said the number two-ranked Sanchez Vicario. "I just tried to concentrate and not think about it and I was able to play well the rest of the way."

Capriati was not as lucky. She had to retire shortly after pulling a muscle running after a drop shot late in the first set.

"I'll take it," Maleeva said about advancing on the default. "I've had to default a few times myself for injuries and sickness. But I'm really happy Jennifer is back playing and I wish her the best."

The number 13-ranked Pierce's loss to the number 23-ranked Frazier brings her 1996 match record to 17-12.

"I made too many unforced errors and I had trouble playing in the windy conditions," said Pierce. "But she kept a lot of balls in play and played well."

In a third-round match postponed by rain, number



First seed Monica Seles of the United States returns a backhand to Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina during action at the Du Maurier Open in Montreal Thursday (Reuters photo)

five seed Mary Joe Fernandez of the U.S. led number

15 seed Nathalie Tauziat of France 6-1, 3-0.

Kafelnikov fires back to ATP Championship quarterfinals

MASON, Ohio (AFP) — Thunder, lightning and the threat of rain couldn't distract determined French Open champion Yevgeny Kafelnikov from staging a comeback here Thursday to reach the quarterfinals of the \$2.2 million ATP Championship.

The Russian, who said this month he was set on improving his career-high world ranking of fourth, showed he meant business as he rallied after dropping the first set against American Chris Woodruff to earn a 6-7 (5/7), 6-4, 7-5 victory as the skies grew progressively darker.

Kafelnikov, who is hoping that a solid U.S. Open performance could lead to a chance at displacing Pete Sampras as world number one, faces his next test against the winner of a match between holder

Andre Agassi, the Olympic champion, and American qualifier Alex O'Brien.

"This was a match that I could have easily lost," Kafelnikov said of his contest against Woodruff, the world No. 53 from Tennessee who upset Agassi in the second round of the French Open.

"I knew the skies were full of rain, but I tried to stay cool. I didn't look at the weather. I was not going to rush myself. It was good for me to have a scare like this on court. It made me concentrate 100 per cent in order to win," Kafelnikov, 22, said.

"I'm happy that I got through. This win gives me confidence, and that is something I can use in my next match," Kafelnikov.

from the Black Sea resort of Sochi, added.

Earlier, 1995 Roland Garros champion Thomas Muster of Austria, the second seed, moved safely through, destroying Australia's Wimbledon semi-finalist Jason Stoltenberg 6-2, 6-2. Croatia's Goran Ivanisevic, winner of four titles at the start of the year, came from behind to eliminate German Bernd Karbacher 3-6, 6-3, 6-3.

Ivanisevic said that he was still trying to live down his failure to win a Wimbledon title despite making the finals twice, in 1992 and 1994.

After losing this year in the quarter-finals to Stoltenberg, the Croatian went home to split for a few days — but they were anything

but relaxing.

"I wanted to have my holidays and not think too much about Wimbledon. But people in my country are strange. They leave notes on my car 'you are never going to win Wimbledon'."

"They don't understand. It is negative, it's a negative city. When you play good it's 'oh, great.'"

Shortly after Kafelnikov and Ivanisevic got off court, the rain did begin, forcing matches to be halted with former world number one Jim Courier holding a 1-0 lead in the third set over South African Wayne Ferreira.

Italian qualifier Cristiano Carati broke world number three Michael Chang to love to take a 3-2 lead when their match was taken off court after 16 minutes.

The pair's only other meeting came at the 1992 Australian Open, with the Italian taking a set off the Chinese-American Sampras was due for a night match with Australian veteran Mark Woodforde, winner along with partner Todd Woodbridge of the Olympic doubles title.

Swede Thomas Enqvist and Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek were due to play after dark with rain dominating the weather forecast.

Italian soccer crisis goes into extra time

ROME (R) — Italy's soccer crisis went into extra time Wednesday when the National Olympic Committee (CONI) stepped in to tackle the troublesome election of a new federation chief.

Officials said CONI President Mario Pescante would interrupt his post-Olympic holiday in the United States to fly home for a special meeting Monday.

Representatives of 5,500 professional and amateur clubs failed to pick a replacement for federation boss Antonio Matarrese Tuesday despite two rounds of voting at a 14-hour meeting.

A bitter clash between Luciano Nizzola, president of the football league, and Serie C President Giancarlo Abete highlighted deep splits between the three national divisions and deadlocked a decision on the sport's top job.

CONI is expected to appoint an interim figure Monday, before the new season gets under way on

Sept. 8. The smart money is on CONI Secretary-General Raffaele Pagnozzi, who would run the federation pending a new election.

A CONI spokesman said another vote was not likely to happen immediately. Federation officials anticipated it could be two to three months before a fresh election was called.

The Gazzetta Dello Sport called Tuesday "The longest and most miserable day in Italian soccer." "Two votes, one truth," the paper said. "Italian soccer is without a president, without a government, full of rows, tension and misery."

The knives had been out for Matarrese, federation president for eight years, since Italy crashed out of the European Championship in June after the first round.

Italy's poor showing in the Atlanta Olympics, where the squad also failed to get past the first phase, sealed his fate.

Matarrese, seeking to salvage some dignity,

announced Tuesday that he was quitting. But by then all hope of a smooth handover to another candidate had evaporated.

Nizzola, a poker-playing tennis fan, won the backing last month of Serie A and Serie B clubs and looked set to be the next federation president until Abete entered the fray with the unanimous backing of the minor league clubs.

Under highly complicated election rules which the Corriere Dello Sport newspaper described as an "elephantine process," a candidate has to win the endorsement of a third of each league.

Despite two rounds of voting and hours of attempted mediation by Matarrese, neither man managed that. Nizzola won more than three times as many votes as his rival in both ballots but failed to win over the clubs from Serie C.

"I'd just like to know in what other situation whoever holds 30 votes can prevent the election of

someone who has won nearly 4,000," Nizzola said. "With a result like that, there's no way I'm thinking of stepping down."

Corriere Della Sera was unimpressed, slamming soccer's "own goal" and saying: "Chaos has been elected."

"Soccer definitely hasn't painted a very good picture of itself," Abete told reporters. But he was unrepentant, saying he was just bringing into the open problems that had been allowed to rumble on for years.

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U.S. ready to meet EU halfway on Iran and Libya sanctions

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States said Thursday it can be flexible in deciding whether to slap sanctions on gas and oil companies that invest in Iran or Libya as the European Union (EU) presented a formal complaint.

Two representatives of the 15-member EU met with State Department officials to register their strong disapproval of the Iran-Libya sanctions act that President Bill Clinton signed on Monday.

"We underlined that the EU does not believe that the Iran-Libya act is either an appropriate or an effective means of combating international terrorism," EU spokeswoman Ella Krucoff said in a statement.

The State Department separately said it intended to move forward and implement the law but it emphasized that the administration has latitude in deciding whether to impose sanctions.

"There is a great degree of flexibility that is built into this legislation," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

The Iran-Libya sanctions act calls for punishing foreign companies that invest

more than \$40 million in the oil and gas sectors of Libya or Iran.

But the president is given the option of choosing any two of six sanctions, some of which could amount to little more than a slap on the wrist.

These include a ban on exports of U.S. technology, on financial assistance from the Export-Import Bank and on access to federal government contracts.

Mr. Burns stressed that the president has "the flexibility to waive the sanctions, should we believe that any country beyond our shores has taken tougher measures against Iran and Libya."

"We'd like to see, frankly, some of these European governments adopt tougher measures against Iran," Mr. Burns said. "Should they do so, I think they'll be met halfway by the United States."

The remarks came after protests worldwide over the law continued unabated with Cuba, Vietnam and Malaysia among the latest countries to join in the international outcry.

At the State Department, the EU emissaries served notice that they will take action to counter the law's

effects and suggested a complaint to the World Trade Organisation was imminent.

But their demarche remained low key with press officials declining requests from journalists to provide coverage of their brief visit to the State Department.

The United States has called on European countries to join in the drive to isolate Iran and Libya, which it accuses of supporting terrorism, in particular in the Middle East.

European leaders maintain that cutting off contacts with Tehran will further radicalise the Islamist fundamentalist regime, contrary to the United States which severed diplomatic relations with Iran in 1980.

Europe's policy of "critical dialogue" with Iran has "failed," Mr. Burns said, adding: "It's time to adopt more serious and tougher actions against Iran."

The law comes on the heels of a separate legislation signed by Mr. Clinton in March which punishes foreign firms that do business in Cuba and which the European countries, Canada and Mexico have denounced as a violation of international trade agreements.



THREE MISSING IN SOUTH AFRICA: South African police investigating unit inspects a mini-bus that was Friday hijacked in Alexandra, the township north-east of Johannesburg. Three middle-aged men who were travelling in the cab, believed to be foreign visitors, have vanished without a trace (see story on page 4) (Reuters photo)

Nashashibi assails donor states for breaking pledges

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Palestinian Finance Minister Mohammad Nashashibi angrily accused international donor countries Friday of undermining the Palestinian National Authority by failing to come up with promised aid.

In an interview with Israel public radio, Mr. Nashashibi singled out Japan, the European Union and the United States as the worst laggards in paying out aid pledges which for the years 1996 and 1997 were to total \$2.5 billion.

"The failure of these donor countries is leading towards an economic catastrophe" for the Palestinians, Mr. Nashashibi was quoted as telling Israel Radio.

"These funds are indispensable to permit the

Palestinian (National) Authority to pay the salaries of policemen and civil servants and to continue providing public services," he was quoted as saying.

Mr. Nashashibi did not provide details on how much aid had been disbursed by the donors, saying only that it was far below the amount pledged.

He said the difficulties caused by the lack of aid disbursement was combining with the effects of Israel's six-month-old closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to cause great hardship for the Palestinian territories.

He said the closure, which has prevented thousands of Palestinians from working in Israel, had pushed unemployment in the territories to 25 per cent.

Time running out for Karadzic and Mladic, NATO chief says

PARIS (R) — Time is running out for indicted war criminals Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic who have become liabilities for their Bosnian Serb supporters, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) chief Javier Solana said in an article published on Friday.

Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic and his commander General Mladic "don't have much time left: their main concern is to escape arrest. They have become a heavy handicap for Bosnian Serbs," he said in the article, published in the French daily le Monde.

Mr. Solana said the NATO-led IFOR peacekeeping force in Bosnia, which has been criticised for failing to arrest the two men, was breaking large units into smaller more mobile groups in order to extend patrols throughout Bosnia.

"This will ensure greater freedom of movement to citizens while forbidding it for indicted war criminals," he said in the article on IFOR's remaining tasks.

But he said IFOR would not change its policy of detaining suspected war criminals only if it came across them. He called on the international community to keep up pressure on the Dayton peace agreement signatories to fulfill their commitments — including handing over war criminals to the U.N. international tribunal.

The Hague-based tribunal has so far indicted 75 men but has only seven of them in custody. The U.N. Security Council this week raised the threat of economic sanctions against any Bosnian party that refused to cooperate with the tribunal's work after Bosnian Serb officials made clear that they were unwilling to surrender their leaders for trial.

Top court upholds Abu Zeid ruling

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt's top court justified its decision to order a professor divorced from his wife for "heresy" saying he had mocked the Prophet Mohammad in his writings, newspapers reported Friday.

The court of cassation on Monday confirmed a lower court's June 1995 ruling that Nasr Hamed Abu Zeid, a Cairo university lecturer, must divorce his wife as under Islamic law a Muslim woman cannot be married to a heretic.

In its full verdict, published by the press here Friday, the court accused Mr. Abu Zeid of "taking a line hostile to Islam."

It said the professor tried to prove that the Koran "was aimed only at boosting the strength of the Korish tribe" of which the Prophet Mohammad was a member.

"He also mocked the Prophet" by saying Mohammad had a strong feeling of clan loyalty, and that it was the tribe that attributed a divine character to him, the court said. The court of cassation, whose verdicts cannot be appealed, also backed the lower court's arguments in its ruling last year, accusing Mr. Abu Zeid of denying that the Koran is the word of God.

In his work, the professor called for a modern reinterpretation of the Koran to bring it up to date with the times. International and Egyptian human rights organisations have condemned the divorce order as violating his right to freedom of expression. Mr. Abu Zeid, who has moved to the Netherlands with his wife, plans to keep fighting the ruling.

U.N. ruling on Turkey's Iraq request

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The U.N. Sanctions Committee on Thursday put off until at least the end of the month a decision on whether to allow Turkey to resume limited trade with sanctions-hit Iraq, the committee chairman said.

Sanctions Committee Chairman Tono Eitel told a news conference here that the 15 members needed "more time" to study the request, which was described as "understandable" and "legitimate" at a preliminary discussion on Thursday.

Mr. Eitel said the issue would be raised again at the committee's next meeting

NEWS IN BRIEF

Oman to open trade office in Israel

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Oman will be the first Gulf Arab state on Sunday to open a trade representative office in Israel, three months after Israeli diplomats arrived in the Omani capital Muscat, officials said. Chief Omani representative Mohsen Al Balushi met with the foreign ministry director-general, Eitan Ben Tsur on Wednesday and began working out of a Tel Aviv hotel suite on Thursday to set up the office, ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor said. Mr. Balushi and Israeli officials will inaugurate the trade office on Sunday, located at 100 Hashmonaim Street in Tel Aviv, said an Israeli trade delegation official in Muscat. Oman and Israel agreed last January to establish relations via an exchange of commercial representative offices. The Israeli delegation in Muscat has been based in one of the capital's major hotels since May, a month after former Israeli Premier Shimon Peres made a landmark trip to Oman and Qatar. Doha was also to open a trade office in the Jewish state, but postponed the move following the election in May of right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In July Mr. Netanyahu's top political advisor Dore Gold travelled to both Muscat and Doha to assure them of the new right-wing government's commitment to peace, Israeli diplomats said.

Erbakan to visit Iran today

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's pro-Islamic Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan flies to Iran Saturday to discuss bilateral ties, despite U.S. displeasure that its NATO ally is consorting with one of the leading sponsors of world terrorism. The premier's visit to Turkey's neighbour has drawn criticism from the United States, which is seeking to isolate Tehran for its support for terrorism. Mr. Erbakan's first official trip abroad since he assumed the premiership in June, has also been criticised by Turkish opposition parties. Earlier this week U.S. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns reacted to Turkey's announcement of the visit, saying "we have made it clear to the Turkish government that Iran is a state that should be isolated." "We will watch the development of this (Turkish-Iranian) relationship very carefully."

Libya calls Arab talks on Israel's arsenal

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Libya has called for an urgent meeting of the Arab League amid claims that Israel is building up its arms arsenal to include chemical weapons and germ warfare, the Libyan agency IANA said Friday. The Libyan government has held intensive contacts with the Arab League to ask it to call emergency talks "following information that the Israeli enemy possesses chemical and bacteriological weapons, including toxic gases, developed in a factory in the desert. IANA said that according to the reports Israel is "carrying out research into germ warfare." However, it gave no indication of where these reports had come from. Libya has called the meeting because "of the danger posed by the possession of such arms as well as 200 nuclear warheads to Arab national security."

Arafat's wife defends Israel's first lady

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Palestinian First Lady Suha Arafat came to the defence of her Israeli counterpart Friday, calling media attacks against Sarah Netanyahu "shameful."

In an interview in the Israeli mass circulation daily Yediot Aharonot, the wife of Palestinian National Authority President Yasser Arafat offered some friendly advice to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's spouse.

"Sarah should in no way apologise or respond to the attacks against her in the Israeli media," she said. "Published revelations about her private life have been

shameful." The Israeli press last month gave broad coverage to revelations by a nanny who was summarily fired by Sarah Netanyahu in a dispute over care of the couple's two children.

Newspapers also embarrassed the prime ministerial couple with reports that Sarah Netanyahu was booked into an extravagant suite in Stockholm for an international conference just as the government at home was announcing big budget cuts.

"I also have a nanny and sometimes we differ over how to raise our child," Suha Arafat said in defence

of the Israeli leader's wife. Mrs. Arafat, who was only 29 when she married Mr. Arafat five years ago, said she used to burst out in tears over stories published about her.

"Gradually, I got stronger. And then I made a decision: Let them write what they want. I will shut my eyes tight and ignore what they say about me," she said.

Press reports several months ago said Mrs. Arafat was pregnant with the second child, but she told Yediot the reports were untrue. Her daughter Zahwa was born in July 1995.

Mrs. Arafat said she would be happy to meet with Mrs.

Netanyahu, but that it was too soon to initiate such a meeting.

Suha Arafat said her husband had taught her to ignore media sniping. "When the dogs bark, it doesn't keep a caravan from passing," she quoted him as saying.

"Sarah and Benjamin Netanyahu are a new kind of couple on the Israeli political scene," she said. "They are young, good looking and charming and the press isn't used to this and is picking on the easiest target, Sarah," she said. Mrs. Arafat said she would be happy to meet with Mrs. Netanyahu, but that it was too soon to initiate such a meeting.

Palestinian hospitalised after torture in Nablus jail

NABLUS (AP) — A man arrested for taking part in a protest against the torture of prisoners in Palestinian jails was hospitalised Thursday and said he himself had been tortured.

Ayman Sabbah, 35, was among hundreds of Palestinians arrested following anti-government protests set off by the death last week of prisoner Mahmoud Jemayel, who died from internal bleeding and a broken skull.

Palestinian officials said Jemayel's death was an isolated incident. But even as his interrogators were tried and convicted in a Palestinian military court last weekend, dozens of Palestinians who had protested his death were themselves being tortured, released detainees said.

Jemayel's death and accusations of brutality by Palestinian security forces are putting new pressure on the 2-year-old government of Yasser Arafat.

The Palestinian legislative council met behind closed doors in the West Bank town of Ramallah on Thursday to

hear from a committee of legislators that investigated Jemayel's death.

Legislator Azmi Shuabi said the council would ask for a secret session with Mr. Arafat to discuss limiting the powers of the security forces.

"We're not talking about a case here and there," he said. "It's coming from the headquarters. They don't obey the law."

"The only way to stop this kind of case is to limit the forces' power and to make them responsible to the law. If we don't, it will continue."

Mr. Shuabi said security officials in charge of the three interrogators convicted of killing Jemayel had refused to speak to the committee.

Committee member Salah Tamari, an outspoken critic of Mr. Arafat, said the committee found that "violations of human rights were individual — but numerous."

"If we overlook them, then they will become systematic."

In an interview Thursday from his hospital bed in Nablus, Mr. Sabbah told the Associated Press that inter-

rogators at Jneid prison — the same prison where Jemayel was tortured — had whipped his feet and hands and forced him to lie on a chair while one interrogator pressed on his feet and another on his chest.

Mr. Sabbah, who suffers from asthma, said he was also forced to stand on one foot with his hands in the air and to sit down and stand up hundreds of times in succession, he said.

"I thought I was going to die," Mr. Sabbah said, looking pale and tired. "I kept on falling because I was passing out."

Mr. Sabbah was initially admitted to the intensive care of Nablus' national hospital and later transferred to another department.

Mr. Sabbah, who has four children and runs a spare car parts business, was arrested after taking part in a protest in Tulkarem on Friday against mistreatment of prisoners in Palestinian jails.

He denied accusations that he had thrown stones at police and said his interrogators had wanted him to give them names of others who took

part in the protest.

There was no immediate response Thursday from Palestinian officials.

Other detained protesters also told the AP they had been beaten and whipped, and an Associated Press reporter who visited the Jneid prison was told by several prisoners that they had been chained by their hands, beaten and threatened with death.

Including Jemayel, seven Palestinians have died in custody since the start of the Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in May 1994.

Ghassan Khatib, director of a Palestinian media centre in Jerusalem and an Arafat critic, said the torture cases that have surfaced in the past week are not exceptional.

"Almost every detainee is beaten up," he said. Mr. Khatib said he believed the abuses stemmed from "the mentality, education and training of the top security officers" who in many cases were trained in Arab countries where he said mistreatment of detainees is standard practice.

COLUMN 8

Tarzan author's family sues over porn film

NEW YORK (R) — Tarzan may wear a loin cloth and live with a woman in the jungle, but the descendants of his creator filed a lawsuit against pornographic film makers to keep his image wholesome. The company owned by the family of author Edgar Rice Burroughs filed suit in Manhattan Federal Court against the makers of a pornographic movie and CD-Rom called Jungle Heat. The complaint says: "defendants' Jungle Heat film is nothing more than a lewd, vulgar and highly offensive film that depicts the Tarzan and Jane characters engaged in numerous scenes of sexual intercourse, fellatio, sodomy and group sex."

British gambler wins £1,000 in alien bet

LONDON (R) — A British gambler won £1,000 (\$1,540) with a bet he placed last August that alien life would be discovered within a year, the Sun newspaper said. Little expecting Wednesday's announcement from NASA that it had found evidence in a meteorite that life once existed on Mars, bookmaker William Hill gave odds of 10-to-one on the bet placed on Aug. 21, 1995. "I'll spend my winnings on a fantastic holiday, but I won't be going quite as far as Mars," winner Steve Upton told the Sun.

Honduran drunks having their ears cut off

TEGUCIGALPA (R) — Unknown culprits cut off the ears of 12 drunks in a city in western Honduras, the newspaper La Prensa reported. Police are investigating the bizarre series of crimes that have rocked Santa Rosa de Copan, a city of 70,000 people about 270 kilometres west of the capital of Tegucigalpa. The victims, who usually were passed out on the streets, have had one ear cut off, La Prensa said.

Mission Impossible star in Italy yacht rescue

NAPLES (R) — American actor Tom Cruise, star of the Hollywood blockbuster film Mission: Impossible, helped rescue five people whose yacht caught fire off Italy's resort island of Capri, a port official said. The official said a French couple, their seven-year-old daughter and two Italian crew members had sought refuge in a rubber lifeboat after an electrical short circuit caused a fire in the cabin of their yacht late Tuesday night. He said Cruise, his actress wife Nicole Kidman, their two young children and several friends were nearby on the yacht Thalita G and took the five people on board.

Colin Powell tops dinner guest wish-list

WASHINGTON (R) — Retired General Colin Powell is favoured over both President Bill Clinton and his Republican rival Bob Dole on a wish-list of political dinner companions among Americans, according to a poll. The former general was preferred by 33 per cent of those who were asked with whom they would like to have dinner, while Mr. Clinton came in second with 24 per cent. In fact, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton beat out Sen. Dole, 16 per cent to 11 per cent, among preferred dinner guests in the poll taken by Good Housekeeping and NBC News.

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